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Packwood's Game Plan • Lugar Fever • Ehrenreich on Richard Ford

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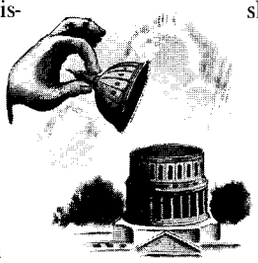
FROM WASHINGTON

Gorilla tactics

Male primates are notorious for clinging desperately to social status. An aging alpha chimpanzee seldom cedes the throne to a younger, stronger rival without a knock-down, drag-out fight. And (to take an example closer to home) Senator Bob Packwood seems determined not to recede gracefully from Washington's corridors of power. Facing allegations of serial slobber-kissing, he now demands a nationally televised showdown with his accusers, rather than quietly accept his fate: Senate censure, the loss of his Finance Committee chairmanship, perhaps even the loss of his Senate seat.

This inter-species comparison is not as facile as it sounds. According to evolutionary psychologists, the reason for the extreme male thirst for power is basically the same in chimpanzees as in humans: during evolution, social status, though conducive to genetic proliferation for both males and females, was especially so for males. Those early human males who attained high status had more wives or more lovers—thus more offspring—than the next guy. So mutant genes encouraging an inordinate thirst for status flourished, eventually becoming standard equipment in men. Hence, for example, Packwood.

In this light Packwood sympathizers might fashion a Darwinian defense of him. It is natural for men to pursue status and convert it into sex; he just needs to brush up on his conversion technique, do a better job of distinguishing between women who want his tongue in their mouths and women who don't. Indeed, conservative pundit Mona Charen has said roughly as much on TV: congressional womanizers are usually talked about with "a big smile and a smirk"; Packwood's crime was being an "unsuccessful womanizer."



Charen's defense dovetails with the defense Packwood himself is preparing. He's depicting his tormentors as nit-picking puritans. Okay, so years ago he drank too much—and occasionally got a tad too friendly. He doesn't remember many of these episodes, he says, because he was drunk at the time; but, if they did happen, then he's *sorry*, okay? As for the more serious incidents, such as the one involving a teenager: these *didn't* happen (and he distinctly remembers their failure to happen). In the end—once he has admitted some small mistakes, sworn off the booze that caused them and denied the larger mistakes—what's the big deal?

Well, first of all, I'll agree to acquit Packwood of mistakes made while drunk when he agrees to free all prisoners who committed crimes while drunk—or while on crack, or on any other blame solvent. Second, there's a difference between slobbering on a woman who is free to slap you to your senses and slobbering on a woman who works for you, as Packwood allegedly did again and again. When a fellow pundit made this point on TV recently, Charen started discussing "sexual harassment" in technical terms, noting that Packwood didn't fire women who brushed him off. Oh, please. Obviously, any woman getting her paychecks via Packwood would feel seriously inhibited from telling him to take a hike when he came looking for sex (or, if she did muster the courage, might feel anxious about the fallout for years). And it's your tax dollars that would be doing the inhibiting. Doesn't that qualify as a misuse of public office?

There's another issue here that, oddly, has gotten little attention. Packwood was married during the period in question. So the affairs he was trying to start (and presumably he succeeded on, say, one in 500 tries) were extramarital affairs—something lots of Republicans profess intolerance of. They note that many kids are now being reared either without fathers or with inattentive stepfathers and that many a destructive divorce has begun with a casual dalliance. Some of these Republicans further note that politicians can exert, by example, great influence on behavioral norms.

If Packwood were schooled in evolutionary psychology, he would have a ready reply. Though prominent men are, indeed, unusually powerful role models, they also have an unusually hard time being good ones. Men are designed to capitalize sexually on any high status they attain; when you carry that aura of power, and draw those admiring glances from nubile women, your neurochemistry powerfully urges you to take the next step. It's easy for us non-potentates to preach

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A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE— AND NOT MADE—IN WASHINGTON.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

SEPTEMBER 18 & 25, 1995

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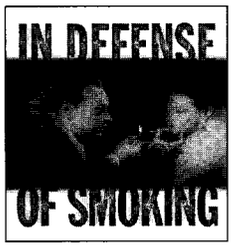

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 213, Numbers 12 & 13, Issues 4,209 & 4,210, September 18 & 25, 1995. (Printed in the U.S. on August 30, 1995.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 21 & 28, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1995) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1995 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Out of control

To the editors:

Some of Michael Lind's history in "The Out-of-Control Presidency" (August 14) is incorrect. The Harrison he refers to in the concluding paragraph of section II is William Henry, not Benjamin. And William Henry did not limit his prospective use of the veto to unconstitutional laws. He said:

> I consider the veto power, therefore, given by the Constitution to the Executive of the United States solely as a conservative power, to be used only first, to protect the Constitution from violation; secondly, the people from the effects of hasty legislation where their will has been probably disregarded or not well understood, and, thirdly, to prevent the effects of combinations violative of the rights of minorities.

It all became moot when he died within a few weeks of his inauguration.

C. THOMAS BASTIEN
Denver, Colorado

To the editors:

Michael Lind notes that some of the "reforms" backed by congressional Republicans will tend to weaken the Congress as an institution. There is no better example of this perverse trend than the efforts by House Republicans to perpetuate cold war secrecy in the executive branch.

It would be extraordinary for Congress to prevent the release of documents that the president wants to declassify. But that is exactly what the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which seems to have been captured by CIA hardliners, is trying to do. By tightly limiting the amount that an intelligence agency can spend on declassification, the committee apparently hopes to guarantee that the intelligence community will remain unaccountable indefinitely. (The proposed $2.5 million spending limit was actually sponsored by committee Democrats, since Republicans wanted to prohibit all funding for declassification.)

Belying any purported concern about cutting costs, the committee authorized more for intelligence spending than the president requested.

STEVEN AFTERGOOD
Washington, D.C.

Stopgap

To the editors:

In "The Race Gap" (August 14), you praise for its "admirable clarity" our office's memorandum on the legal standards governing federal affirmative action programs. I must point out, however, that our memo does not conclude that virtually all efforts to diversify the federal workforce are necessarily unconstitutional, as you suggest.

The Court in *Adarand* made clear that even under strict scrutiny, affirmative action is constitutional in certain circumstances. We did conclude, as you stated, that to survive strict scrutiny any affirmative action program (other than those intended to remedy the identified effects of past discrimination) must seek some further objective beyond the mere achievement of diversity itself. But we went on to note that, in a variety of contexts, governments may well have such objectives. Justice Powell's opinion in *Bakke*, for example, concludes that in fields such as higher education the further objective that is served by diversity is the enrichment of the academic experience of the whole community. (This argument does not rest on any essentialist notion that all persons of a particular race or ethnicity necessarily think alike but, rather, on the common sense proposition that increasing the diversity of the student body is, in the aggregate, very likely to make a real difference in the array of perspectives communicated, and thus to enhance a university's educational mission.)

Diversity in other areas, such as among the ranks of law enforcement and other government agencies, may serve operational needs of those agencies and significantly enhance the performance of their functions. Where that is demonstrated to be the case, *Adarand* does not foreclose appropriate affirmative action measures.

WALTER DELLINGER
Assistant Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.

Tanked

To the editors:

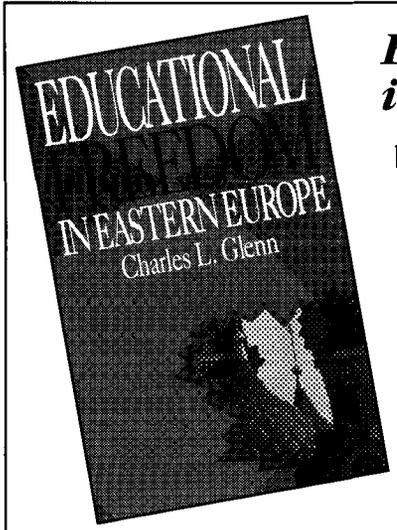
Advice to James Wood as he moves from London to America: speak English.

His review of *The Information* ("Little Big Man," August 14) was almost as impenetrable as the prose of Amis's protagonist, Richard Tull. Not that I finished the review; in the fifth paragraph, while wrestling with "disparity readiness" and the "tank of the contemporary," I was inexplicably stricken with Tourette's syndrome.

TONY HORWITZ
Waterford, Virginia

To the editors:

While James Wood's criticism of Martin Amis's novel *The Information* raises



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several interesting points, it misses the main one: namely, that despite Amis's best Americanized intentions, he still writes in the great English literary tradition of class warfare. Evidence the scene on the airplane quoted. It's Elmore Leonard and not Saul Bellow who Amis venerates and longs to emulate as his recent review of a Leonard novel in *The New York Times Review of Books* clearly reveals. The blockbuster novel, lurid with sex, tough talk and violence is the novel Amis, and his epicene character Richard, can't bring themselves to write. The frontier tradition of the American novel is its past and future, and today the last frontier resides in the demimonde, where law and morality end and class means a big tip.

DEAN GRAVES
Reno, Nevada

Air ball

To the editors:

Your "White Men Can Jump" blurb, (Notebook, August 14) concerning Senator Bill Bradley's affirmative action comments was a juvenile effort at sarcasm at the expense of even a juvenile level of understanding. Bradley's comments on "Meet the Press" that as a Midwestern white Christian basketball player he had benefited from preferential admission policies at Princeton University clearly were intended to reveal that affirmative action-type policies now under attack were not deemed objectionable when the beneficiaries were white Christian athletes from the Midwest. How silly and lacking in basic skills of comprehension for you to sarcastically suggest that Bradley was arguing for a return to the preferences by which he benefited.

MARK BAUMKEL
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Chip shot

To the editors:

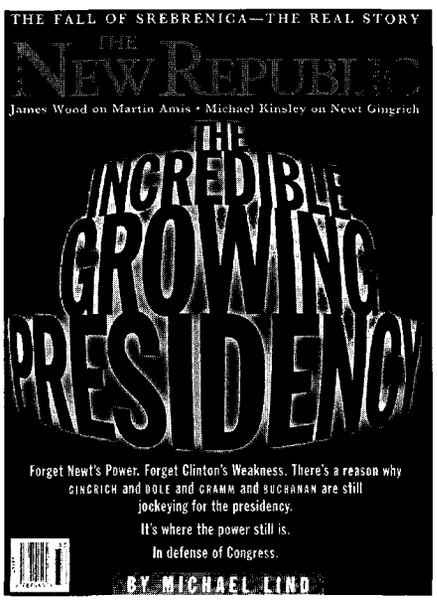
Michael Kinsley's review of Newt Gingrich's book *To Renew America* ("The Thinker," August 14) was refreshing and welcome, but he missed one of the most glaring gaps of all in the speaker's government-never-gets-it-right philosophy when he quotes Gingrich as saying, "If the federal government had improved at the same pace as the computer chip, it would only have four employees and a total budget of $100,000." What Kinsley should have pounced on was that it was not some plucky private entrepreneur who developed microchip technology, it was the bureaucracy pumping massive federal funds into defense projects with the express purpose of developing cutting-edge weapons systems. Corporate America would never have touched it on its own. Why spend huge amounts of money on elevating industry standards when your competitors stand to profit from it? I suppose Gingrich hasn't wondered which private corporation is going to front the countless billions required for research and development if his dream of "honeymoons on Mars" is to come true. Corporate America's record in that area has not been encouraging.

QUADE WINTER
Weehawken, New Jersey

New breed

To the editors:

About Ruth Shalit's snide disregard for Helen Bransford's difficult journey to


THE FALL OF SREBRENICA—THE REAL STORY
THE NEW REPUBLIC
James Wood on Martin Amis • Michael Kinsley on Newt Gingrich
THE INCREDIBLE GROWING PRESIDENCY
Forget Newt's Power. Forget Clinton's Weakness. There's a reason why GINGRICH and DOLE and GRAMM and BUCHANAN are still jockeying for the presidency.
It's where the power still is.
In defense of Congress.
BY MICHAEL LIND

motherhood via surrogacy ("Breeders," August 14). Shalit doesn't get it. Bransford didn't hold up her personal struggle to become a mother in her 40s as a model but as an example for us all to learn from.

If Shalit is mid-twentysomething, she is the beneficiary of Helen Bransford's delayed motherhood, and that of thousands like her. Women in their 40s saw in their 20s that society did not accept, nurture nor condone working moms. No maternity leave. No paternity leave. No job that would wait. Have a baby. Lose a career.

Because Bransford's generation chose to pursue a professional life, her generation also had to prove they wanted it. They didn't get pregnant. They ignored the ticking biological clock. Twenty years later, Helen Bransford wants a baby. Just one. The ultimate fulfillment in a happy marriage. To succeed she applied the intensity she had previously used to navigate business. Her standards for an egg donor were high and she found the best. Her standards for a surrogate were high but she took the best she could find. She tried to manage the process toward a successful outcome.

What Helen Bransford could not control was the heartbreaking depth of her love. All mothers learn it. Some in their 20s. Bransford in her 40s. Her story reflects the gravity of that lesson and lives changed forever. Shalit has more choices both in and out of the office today because Bransford waited. Shalit should thank her and wish a new mother and her twins all the best.

KERRY BROCK
Nashville, Tennessee

Siren songs

To the editors:

Doug Weiskopf (Correspondence, August 14) argues that fiscal responsibility on the part of elected officials "doesn't win elections." We should praise elected officials who take the tough votes on budget discipline rather than deny that such integrity is possible. Leaders such as Bob Kerrey, Alan Simpson, Charles Robb and John Breaux say unpopular things to voters and make tough votes yet continue to be re-elected. And Senate Finance Committee Republicans John Chafee and Bob Packwood resist the siren song of tax cuts in favor of fiscal responsibility.

Too often, strong candidates leave election contests to irresponsible demagogues. What we need is more leadership, more encouragement to those who now refuse to seek public service, not glib dismissals that responsible individuals cannot be elected.

THOMAS O'BRIEN
Horizon Institute for Policy Solutions
Charlottesville, Virginia

Public display

To the editors:

I am sure that Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. has, by now, stopped spinning in his grave after James Weinstein's letter to the editors (August 14) informed us that "Holmes declared that ... the state held title to pubic property...." What next, THE NEW REPUBIC?

WILLIAM H. SKINNER
Washington, D.C.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 18 & 25, 1995

FINALLY

The right thing, at last. In the largest military operation in its history, NATO is raining what Boris Yeltsin calls "a cruel bombardment" (we hope that he is correct) on the war machine of the Bosnian Serbs. The military objective of this air and land assault is to make the "safe areas" finally safe, to diminish or to destroy the power of the Bosnian Serb ability to attack them, and so the targets are strategic ones, Serb communications centers, Serb arms depots, and the like. The political objective seems twofold: to bring the Bosnian Serbs to the bargaining table and to rescue NATO, the United States, the United Nations, and the possibility of justice from the international oblivion to which they had just about been consigned by the inaction of the West in Bosnia. At this writing, a NATO spokesman is telling CNN that the strikes are "open-ended," that they will "keep going" until their objectives are accomplished, that they denote "a much more robust role for the NATO alliance" in the Balkans.

The world has been made a little saner, especially for the perdurable people of Sarajevo and Gorazde and Tuzla, who may experience a day, or a week, not in the grip of despair. (Their bitterness will never leave them, but it is a mark of intelligence.) To be sure, the ravings in Pale continue, as Radovan Karadzic swears to Reuters that "we will win in the end," but he, too, detects a reversal of fortune, and so he sent a letter to Jimmy Carter, who sees into his heart, to announce that he is "prepared to negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement on the basis of the current U.S. peace initiative." A new, improved Karadzic is upon us. Mike Wallace has just returned with an exclusive from Pale, where he discovered that Karadzic is a thoughtful and not altogether unreasonable fellow.

The West has found its resolve; and yet there is the matter of the aforementioned bitterness. For there is nothing that justifies military action now that would not have justified military action before. "After four years of tragic and terrible warfare," the swelling State Department spokesman tells reporters, "the time has come to end this war." Well, yes; but there is something a little indecent about the words. Those four years might have been three years, or two years, if the government of the United States had promptly recognized its moral and strategic responsibilities. Before the swelling continues, it is important to understand that this strong retort to the Bosnian Serbs is not a fulfillment of the previous American policy but a repudiation of it. For this reason we support the administration's course of action, but we will not congratulate the administration for it. It is not too little, but it is too late.

Indeed, the success of the NATO campaign rather definitively gives the lie to the axioms upon which the Clinton-Ghali policy was based. We were told that the Serbs were too powerful to be challenged militarily; but NATO planes, and the heavy British and French guns of the Rapid Reaction Force, have shattered the myth of Serb invincibility, just as the Croatian troops in the Krajina shattered it last month, and revealed that the Serb forces are merely the Republican Guards of the Balkans, a threat exaggerated by soldiers and politicians who have their own reasons for opposing the use of American force. We were told that the loyalties that animated the Serb aggression were too intractable to be met by the prosaic instruments of foreign policy, that this was a conflict too ancient, too far from reason, to be resolved by Western intervention; but the élan of the Serbs has evaporated, and Belgrade wishes to be unburdened of Pale, and a season of opportunism is at hand. We were told that the solution to the Balkan crisis is diplomatic, not military; but now it is plain that diplomacy in the Balkans is nothing without the use of force. We were told that Bosnia is not an American problem but a European problem, that the United States must take a "backseat" and not go "out front" in the resolution of the conflict; but it is America that led the onslaught and it is an American diplomat who is shuttling between the capitals that are required for a peace.

And we were told one other thing: that the appeasement of ethnic cleansing would never matter in American politics. The joke is on Bill Clinton. The timidity that was urged on him by his national security advisers turns out to have been not only bad strategic advice, but also bad political advice. And yikes, there are already straw polls in Iowa. So the NATO campaign is also the Clinton campaign. It isn't Churchill, but it's something. •

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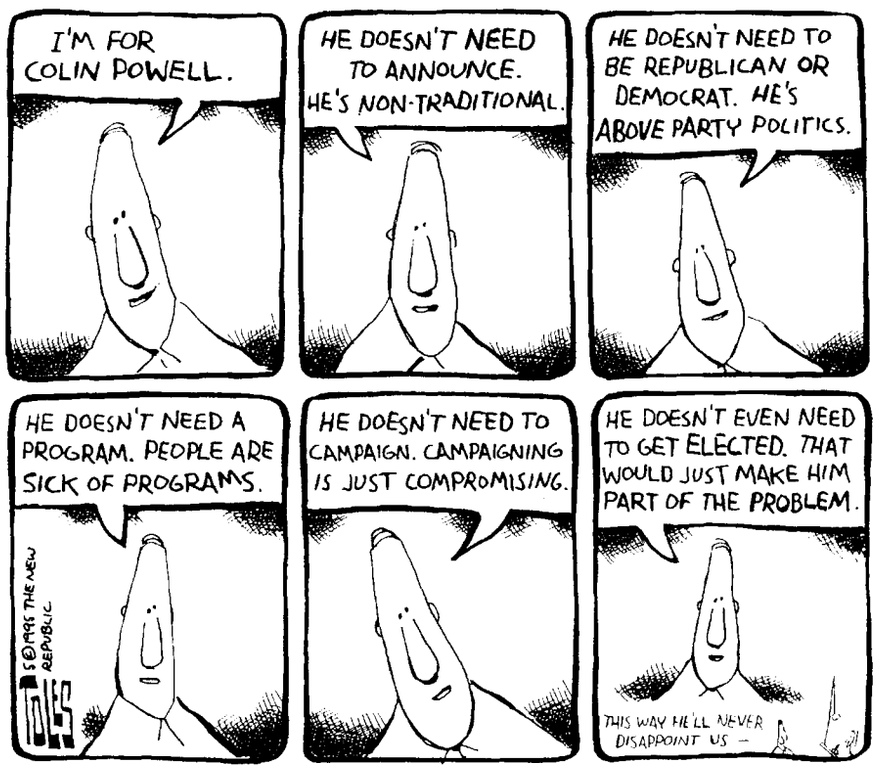
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Guardian Angels founder Curtis Sliwa launched Cyber Angels to monitor sexual harassment and credit card scams on the Internet.... Texas State District Judge Samuel Kiser ordered Marta Laureano to speak English to her 5-year-old daughter on the grounds that communicating only in Spanish constituted child abuse and would make the child "a maid for the rest of her life." ... Melvin Edwin of Tanana, Alaska, will be sentenced for murdering sobriety activist Patti Hyslop while in a drunken rage.... *New Yorker* Editor Tina Brown hired Roseanne to guest-edit a special women's issue.... Retired California policeman Steven Radford has spent $20,000 on seven cosmetic surgery procedures to make him look like Tom Arnold.... A National Science Foundation-funded study has concluded that "women are more frequently sad, unhappy, anxious, angry, depleted and discomforted than men."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HE DOESN'T NEED TO BE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT. HE'S ABOVE PARTY POLITICS.
HE DOESN'T NEED A PROGRAM. PEOPLE ARE SICK OF PROGRAMS.
HE DOESN'T NEED TO CAMPAIGN. CAMPAIGNING IS JUST COMPROMISING.
HE DOESN'T EVEN NEED TO GET ELECTED. THAT WOULD JUST MAKE HIM PART OF THE PROBLEM.
THIS WAY HE'LL NEVER DISAPPOINT US —
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TOLES

THE OLD DOLE: There was a period recently when open-minded independents contemplated supporting a Dole presidency. He'd taken a brave stand on Bosnia; he seemed a moderating and sane force in the Senate; his new senior-citizen image soft-focused his hard, bitter edges. This weekend the other side of Bob Dole was unmasked in his peremptory return of campaign money given him by the Log Cabin Republicans, a gay Republican group. To be sure, the gift was partly a ploy by a brave but fledgling band of gay Republicans—and may have been foolish, tactical politics. But the sheer cynicism of the Dole campaign's gesture—and its craven subservience to the religious right—reminds anyone that Dole's first principle is his political ambition. There's no doubt that Dole and his wife don't personally share the right's bigotry; they are both comfortable around gay people and have no compunction in hiring them. When asked by TNR's Ruth Shalit for example, in a profile for *The New York Times* magazine, what he thought about anti-gay discrimination, Dole expressly said it was un-American. He subsequently had to retract his lapse into civilized behavior for the baying hounds of the right. He should know, however, that there is a political price to be paid. The credibility he was beginning to win with voters in the tolerant center of American politics has been seriously damaged. And the forces of bigotry given a quiet but noticeable nod from someone who should and does know better.

SCHOOL DAZE: Even before the last precious moments of summer had melted away, and kids across the country prepared to drag themselves to the first day of school, America's educators were gloating. They had just learned that the high-school class of '95 had chalked up the highest SAT scores in nearly a decade, and decided it was time to break out the champagne. "Somebody is doing something right," boasted Franklin Smith, superintendent of D.C. schools. "We do have something we can jump up and down and scream about." The five-point jump in verbal scores and the three points in math may seem small but, according to Donald Stewart, president of the College Board, which administers the tests, the increase indicates "early signs of a turnaround in education." Let's not start the party just yet. Credit for the score hikes should go less to the educators than to the 1995 test's user-friendly makeover. The test now has fewer questions, yet students get fifteen extra minutes for each math and verbal section. For the first time, calculators are allowed in the testing room. And the dreaded antonym section has been replaced by a new and improved critical-reading section, which tests vocabulary in context rather than in isolation. Given these luxuries, it's remarkable that scores increased so little. In their defense, educators point to a parallel increase in the number of students taking advanced courses: "Kids are taking harder courses and it's showing up in their scores," cheered

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Secretary of Education Richard Riley. Indeed, last year's spike in SAT scores was driven by better scores at the high end among kids taking the tougher courses. We're happy they'll have less trouble getting into Harvard, but the scores of those below them barely budged. In fact, the best way for states to hike their scores is to restrict test-taking to an elite. In North Dakota, the highest-ranked state, an exclusive 5 percent of high-school juniors and seniors took the SAT, and their average score was an impressive 1107 out of 1600. Compare that to Washington, D.C., ranked 49th, where 53 percent took the test, yanking the average down to 857. So large a gap can only mean that the best students are whizzing through the new test, while the rest are still flailing. This hardly represents a turnaround in education—a pessimism other measures verify. There was no corresponding increase last year in scores on the ACT, an alternative college entrance exam. And when you take kids who never get near the SAT, the numbers are frightening. The 1994 report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the most painfully accurate measure of the state of education, showed that barely one-third of America's high-school seniors are proficient readers, 10 percent fewer than two years ago. Franklin Smith was so horrified by D.C.'s test results that he alone refused to release them. Despite this grim warning, the educational establishment's reality-dodging will likely continue. In a move they euphemistically call "recentering," officials at the College Board will next year boost the average SAT score to 500, raising many combined scores by as much as 100 points. The current scale, their glossy pamphlet explains, is outdated, based on the class of 1941, when only 10,000 students applying to the most elite schools took the test. A valid point, but not one that opportunists like Riley and Smith will pay much attention to. You can almost imagine the headlines next year: "SAT SCORES SOAR;" "TEACHERS, RELAX." Calibrating our mood swings to the latest press release will do nothing to fix America's schools. We may not know the solution, but we do know the problem. Let's at least not gloss over it.

RELIGIOUS RIGHT: The dismay and defensiveness evidenced by many Germans in Bavaria after last month's Constitutional Court ruling that public schools could no longer be required to display crucifixes is understandable. It's also wholly misguided. Nothing good happens when the state enforces religious beliefs. At best, such entanglement makes religion flaccid (compare church-attendance statistics in the U.S. and Great Britain). At worst, well, just read the newspaper. Chancellor Helmut Kohl insists that "After this century's bitter experience with anti-Christian ideologies and their awful and inhuman effects, we feel a special obligation to pass these values on to future generations." But this bitter century has made us aware of another special obligation: to keep any single religion and the state at a respectful, wary distance. This doesn't denigrate religions; it protects adherents of all of them. Is America's religious right paying attention?

FINANCIAL NEWS:

Commission Cut Will Hurt Stockbrokers, Analysts Say

—*The Asian Wall Street Journal*, June 27.
(Thanks to John Underriner of Bangkok, Thailand.)

FROM OUR ECCLESIASTICAL DESK:

Religions have varied views on redemption

—*San Antonio Express-News*, April 4.
(Thanks to Bill Sullivan of San Antonio, Texas.)

DOMESTIC ISSUES: This week we say goodbye to eleven-year veteran Jeff Dearth who, as president of THE NEW REPUBLIC, brought the magazine into the modern age, at least as regards its financial and business operations. And more than that: in an often tense environment he always could be relied on for balanced judgment. He was a trusted friend and mentor to many. His new colleagues at MecklerMedia, a public company where he will be chief operating officer for the magazine group, cannot yet know how lucky they are. We are also lucky, however, with his replacement. Joan Stapleton, who succeeds Jeff as president, has been publisher for many years. She is at once enormously liked and enormously respected, a person both gentle and tough. With this issue David Greenberg leaves the managing editorship for graduate work in history at Columbia. His intellectual gifts and literary style were apparent in every article he edited. We expect he will appear in these pages on a regular basis. Finally, we're pleased to announce that Andrew Sullivan's book, *Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality*, has just been published by Alfred A. Knopf.

GONE FISHING: Was it just us or did the papers seem crammed with exhilarating stories this week? *The New York Times*'s lead story last Monday: SKILLED WORKERS WATCH THEIR JOBS MIGRATE OVERSEAS was only beaten by *The Washington Post*'s AREA'S SCHOOLS PRESSED TO EXCEL AS CLASSES BEGIN. Still, it's comforting to watch one of the noble lies of journalism—that each day, there's the same amount of relevant news—exposed because editors and writers need a few days at the beach. Which is where some of us will be next week. This is a double issue of TNR; the next issue will appear in two weeks' time. We promise not to go whitewater rafting. •

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My life as a *Guinness* gatekeeper.

THE STANDARD

By Caleb Crain

Yesterday I rejected an 82-year-old woman with braces. Too young, no special skills. I felt a brief flicker of pity, which I silently smothered. As the editor (for two and a half months, anyway), I can't let just anyone into *The Guinness Book of Records.* I didn't bother to write a personal note; I sent her a form letter. "How can you live with yourself?" an officemate asked when I told him.

Editing *The Guinness Book of Records* is like editing poetry. The job may impress a few of your friends. To a special circle of people, who you hope will never discover your home telephone number, you are wildly glamorous and powerful. But the bitter truth is you spend most of your days rejecting people. Desperately ambitious people. People who will do nearly anything to win a meager fraction of a column inch in your publication. It either breaks your heart or fills you with sadistic glee.

In a few cases, a no is clearly a mercy killing. I had no qualms about rejecting, for instance, the math instructor in Oregon who, instead of teaching his seventh-graders algebra, was forcing them to thread thousands of soda can tabs together, with the Dickensian goal of driving home a subjective appreciation of the number 1 million. It also seems right to take a firm stand against infant prodigies, especially when their parents have forced them to fly airplanes solo for long distances or lift their own bodyweight in Olympic competitions.

But in the beginning I had trouble coming to terms with this power of veto. I agonized about turning down the woman who found a carrot inscribed with her initials on the processing belt of the cannery where she worked. In neurotic compensation I would scribble a handwritten "Sorry!" at the bottom of many of my form letters to the "Dear Aspiring Record-Breakers," as if a personal touch could soften the blow. Then Paul Newman called.

Sort of. Technically, the phone call came from Warren Cowan, whom a recent issue of *The New Yorker* dubbed "the legendary Hollywood publicist." Newman wanted to be listed as the world's oldest racecar winner. He asked if I could find time in my busy schedule to be photographed with him, but I decided—movies, schmovies—I couldn't. Too young (by two years), and besides, he came in third. Saying no to Paul Newman gave me the self-importance I needed. My task came into focus. I was a guarantor of standards. Once I had rejected Paul Newman, the others were easy, even the woman from Louisiana whose ovarian cyst, the size of a 3-month-old baby, had been successfully removed during surgery. She attributed the tumor to the see-through aliens who used to rape her years ago. Once I explained to her that the world-record ovarian cyst was much larger than a 3-month-old baby—in fact, it was roughly the size of two college basketball players—she demurred as gracefully as Paul had. (Our 1995 edition ran a picture of this world-record cyst, removed intact and glistening an evil yellow—exactly how I imagine "It" from *A Wrinkle in Time.*)

Guinness today is not quite the *Guinness* you remember. An Indian man still dangles the world's longest fingernails, but you won't find the guy who puffed simultaneously on more than a hundred cigarettes. To avoid lawsuits and discourage vice, today's records are medically correct. Feats involving tobacco are out. So are eating disorders—the bulimic champions who stuffed themselves with eels, ravioli and bicycles in earlier editions now go unchronicled. (For some reason, the highest documented blood-alcohol level lingers on.)

Also unchanged, despite decades of market research, are the book's occasionally impenetrable British Imperialisms. Whole sections are devoted not only to snooker and billiards but to sports with names like "curling" and "hurling." Nothing is more nightmarishly baffling to an ignorant editor than a foreign sport. I thought cricket was odd, with its wickets and dismissals. But here's what I've pieced together about curling: if it happens in large clumps, you call it a "bonspiel." Every team is led by a person with the preppyish title of "skip." To play you need specially prepared curling "ice," and once everything is ready you throw "stones." I imagine curling, when performed correctly, has the same menacing thrill as the dénouement of a Stephen King movie set in a small New England town.

Despite my whining, I admit that I've enjoyed my stint working for *The Guinness Book of Records.* I'm compromised into practicing the morally suspect and probably un-American activity of discouraging people from achieving their full potential. But in what other job would I receive a threatening letter from an 11-year-old boy who vows not to change his underwear until I feature him? I'm needed and wanted as never before. Morgan writes to say she literally will not sleep until she hears she has broken a record, and Timmy sends "proof" that he farted 137 times ("inside this letter you will see the fart list"—137 pencil hatch marks). I sympathize more than I let on with the anxious Californians struggling to produce the world's largest burrito, who call to ask, "What exactly do you mean by 'edible'?" And it wouldn't be so hard for me to disillusion the woman who wants to write the world's most romantic poetry ("most" as in quantity, not style) if I didn't, at some level, wish her well. After all, it would be a lovely affront to the tyranny of this world's poetry editors to be able to tell them, "Maybe *The Paris Review* disagrees, but according to *The Guinness Book of Records*. . . ."

CALEB CRAIN no longer works for *The Guinness Book of Records.* He now writes sonnets.

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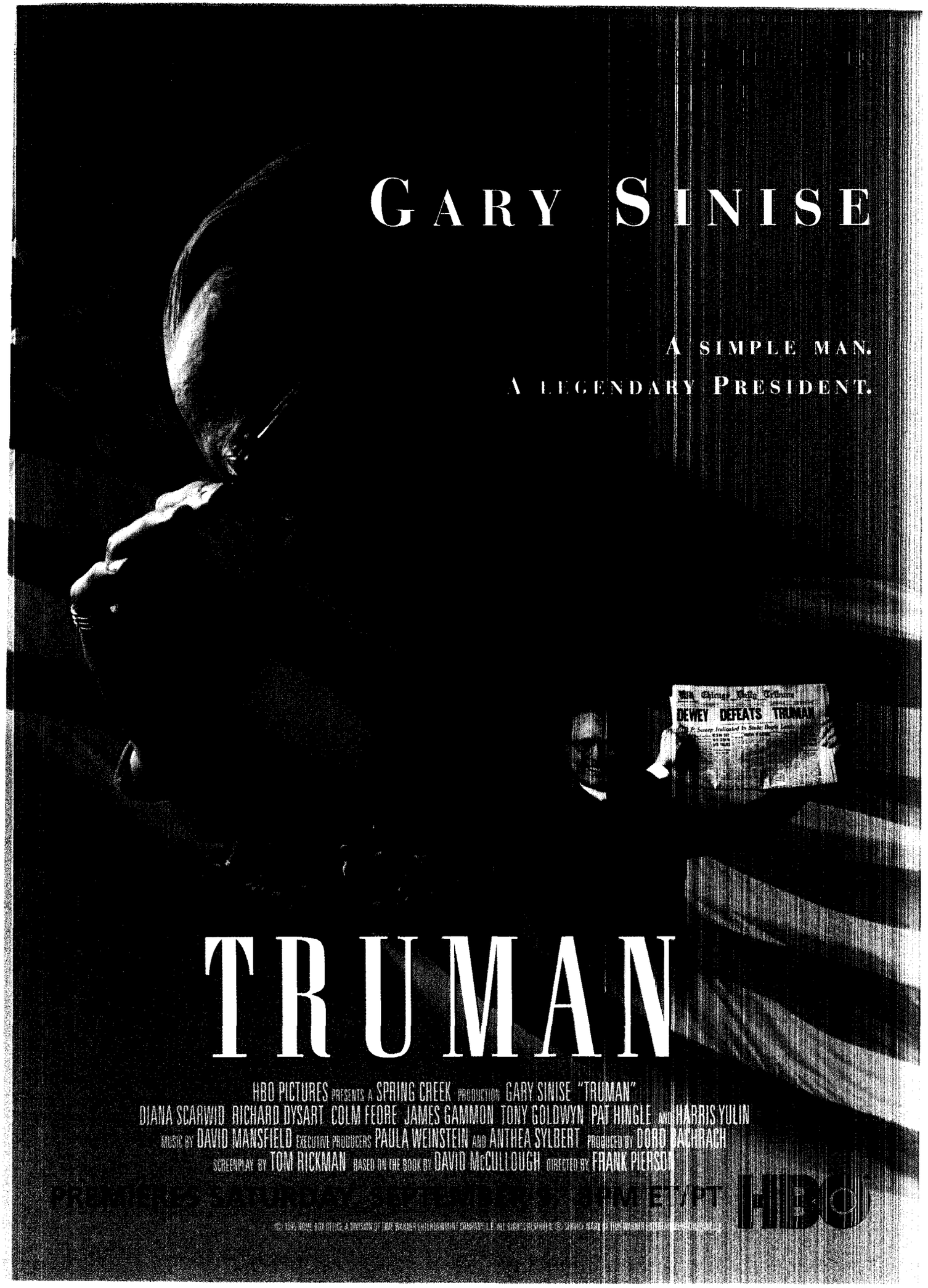
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Forgetting V-J Day.

AMNESIA DAY

By Morton Keller

The past year and more has been a time of heavy remembering. The fiftieth anniversaries of D-Day and V-E Day, the great moments that marked the end of the Second World War in Europe, passed in procession. In early August, the media took special note of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The most passionate of atom-bomb obsessives had little to complain about. A coterie of left-revisionist historians, who for thirty years peddled the view that dropping the bomb was primarily a Truman-Byrnes ploy to get the Japanese war over before the Russians got in, had a field day on the more gullible TV outlets.

Then came mid-August, and the moment to celebrate the surrender of Japan. Now was the time to remind Americans of just what they had fought against in the Pacific: a racist, aggressive and cruel Japanese military leadership and a national culture that supported it. The story of the Japanese sack of China and Southeast Asia, its treatment of Western prisoners of war, its hegemonic ideology, cried out for retelling. Not to do so—to dwell extravagantly on the dropping of the atomic bombs and to all but ignore the character of the Japanese regime that brought war in the Pacific—would be the equivalent of discussing the end of the European war by dwelling on the bombing of Dresden while saying little about the Nazi regime.

Yet that is what happened. Public and commercial television all but ignored the end of the Pacific war. Neither the editorial nor the op-ed columns of *The New York Times* marked what was, for the hundreds of millions of people of East Asia, a far more momentous event than the dropping of the atomic bombs. True, aging American vets staged lackluster marches and ceremonials. And a few of their more verbal comrades—James McGregor Burns, Paul Fussell—introduced a note of realism by discussing what a military invasion of Japan might have entailed. But these were minor voices when set against the pervasive silence.

It was more than simple anniversary burnout; the roots of this non-observance may be located in the ideological divide over America's Pacific war. From Pearl Harbor on, the war against Japan found particular support among former isolationists and Republican conservatives; the war against Nazi Germany among New Dealers, liberals and the Left. Revenge for Pearl Harbor (possibly, the Right came to believe, itself brought on by FDR's machinations), a hatred of the Japanese fueled not only by their perfidy but by their skin color, an ideal right-wing military hero in the person of Douglas MacArthur: all of this made the war against the Japanese the top priority for anti-New Deal Republicans. The war against Nazism, waged in alliance with Stalin's Soviet Union (transmuted by the alchemy of wartime propaganda into a land of agrarian-industrial reformers), offered comparable satisfactions to New Dealers and the American Left.

These predilections continued in the postwar years. Conservatives raised an eyebrow over the legality of the Nuremberg trials. Liberals had few such doubts—although they had many more when it came to the trials of Japanese war criminals. The cold war only reinforced these inclinations. It produced, on the right, Joseph McCarthy defending the SS perpetrators of the Malmédy massacre of American POWs and, on the left, a Communist-led peace offensive that focused on the primal evil of the atomic bomb.

So, when anniversary season rolled around last year, it wasn't surprising that the Left stressed the war in Europe and the dropping of the bomb. But why didn't the Right make more of its ideological patrimony? After all, the anniversary provided an important opportunity to remind Americans that today's realities of a democratic and pacific Japan, peace between Japan and China, and fifty years of real (not ersatz) co-prosperity in East Asia are not the result of some ancient Confucian ethic, or of the inexorable laws of free trade, but of an American political and military presence now imperiled by post-cold war isolationism.

Of course some of that isolationism comes from the Right. And the silence may also result from an unwillingness, shared by the Right, to offend commercially powerful Japan.

But more important is the fact that over the past half-century the meaning of the victory over Nazism has, if anything, become clearer, more unalloyed. The West's victory in the cold war reinforced the wartime theme of democracy v. totalitarianism (even if it eroded the illusions of the alliance with Stalin). So has Germany's confrontation with and repentance for the crimes of Nazism.

Remembrance of the Pacific war has been more complicated. Liberal guilt over the bomb and more general regret at the internment of Japanese-Americans has marred, for some, America's victory. And there is a continuing ambiguity, a lack of closure, in our relationship to East Asia that prevents a full-throated commemoration. Our cold war with the Soviet Union is over, while our relations with China grow frostier by the month. Nor have the Japanese yet confronted their wartime crimes in any way comparable to the Germans. If the German case is any indication, only when Japan does so will its erstwhile enemies, and present-day allies, join them in serious inquiry into that ugly past. Until then, amnesia will remain a malady in both countries.

MORTON KELLER is Spector Professor of History at Brandeis University.

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Turning Dreams into Realities

The "Hitachi Promise of Tomorrow" scholarship program encourages student athletes to take the lessons learned on the football field today and teach children in the classrooms tomorrow.

Encouraging Student Athletes to Become Teachers

During his three years as nose guard on Louisiana State University's football team, John Mawae came to know the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. But nothing moved him more than working with disabled children in a Special Olympics held at LSU. "Seeing those kids realize their dreams against all odds really got to me," Mawae recalls. "I knew then what I wanted to do: help kids like them realize their dreams."

Mawae will get that chance, thanks in part to the "Hitachi Promise of Tomorrow" scholarship program created by the College Football Association (CFA) and sponsored by Hitachi, Ltd. Started last academic year, the program awards $335,000 in scholarships at the 67 CFA member universities. At each university, a $5,000 scholarship is awarded to an outstanding senior or graduate student who intends to become a teacher and has participated in the school's football program as a player, trainer, or manager. Mawae, a 1992 scholarship recipient, intends to use his grant to pursue a career teaching kids with special needs.

"Teaching plays an important but undervalued role in society," says Charles M. Neinas, the CFA's executive director. "We'd like to encourage more student athletes to pursue this field, because we think that what they learn on the football field helps to make them effective teachers in the classroom."

Nicole Hagner, a recent University of Pittsburgh graduate, agrees. "Athletics teaches you that it's possible to turn the right dream into a reality through hard work, discipline and teamwork. I'd like to bring that lesson to the classroom," she says. Hagner, who served as a student trainer on Pitt's football team, plans to use her grant to become certified as a high school biology teacher.

Nicole Hagner, University of Pittsburgh graduate and 1992 scholarship recipient.

As college football fans and parents of school-age children, we are proud to be a part of the "Hitachi Promise of Tomorrow" scholarship program. We hope that it helps more student athletes like John and Nicole to realize their dreams of becoming teachers.

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ON THE HILL

GROPEGATE

By David Grann

On August 2, just after voting with his Republican colleagues against open hearings on the sexual misconduct charges against him, Bob Packwood strode across the Senate floor to Senator Mitch McConnell, chairman of the Ethics Committee. Packwood smiled wanly and touched his principal supporter's arm. "Thank you," he said. A horrified McConnell edged away.

Though the August vote broke almost cleanly along party lines, Republicans were not truly protecting Packwood; they were protecting themselves from the nightmare of bad publicity that open hearings would unleash. Indeed, by initially voting for closed proceedings and giving the appearance of special treatment, Republicans have already conceded Packwood's guilt and likely hastened his political demise.

Packwood, recognizing this betrayal, suddenly reversed himself last week and called for open hearings. He'll probably get them. But don't expect a robust defense from the GOP. Browbeaten by the Christian Coalition, which has no stomach for Packwood's boorishness, and fearful of a public backlash like that triggered by the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings, conservatives are ducking for cover rather than duel with sanctimonious Democrats and women's groups. "There's a McCarthyism out there," said Senator Alan Simpson, who outraged women during the Hill-Thomas hearings, "so that if you talk about these things people will say, 'You just don't get it.' That we're all a bunch of bald, insensitive slobs."

Many Republicans believe in their hearts that there is still a defense, however unpopular, to be made for the clumsy Oregon lothario. There certainly is enough evidence to blur the clear moral lines being drawn by some of Packwood's critics. At one time, conservatives were happy to note that seventeen of the eighteen charges of sexual misconduct against the chairman of the Finance Committee exceed the six-year federal statute of limitations and are, therefore, legally inadmissible. Most of the allegations relate to events that occurred between 1970 and 1985; the two additional ones, filed against Packwood in August, reportedly happened in 1971 and in 1983. "The committee should have brought the best-quality case that they could actually prove—not dump him with every stale charge so that he caves in," said Stanley Brand, a former Democratic general counsel to the House, who has defended members of both parties before the Ethics Committee.

One of the accusers is not even a former employee, and there is no evidence so far that the 62-year-old Packwood threatened staffers' jobs, or promised or blocked promotions in return for sexual favors. This is likely why the Ethics Committee settled for the vague charge of "sexual misconduct" rather than harassment. Yet, when it came time to raise these crucial points during the vote on open hearings, most Republicans cowered in their offices. During the debate a flustered McConnell stood in a virtually empty chamber. "Packwood is being sacrificed by the Republicans in the Senate just to save their own political hides," said Pamela Aycock, a former Packwood staffer.

When a few Republicans finally emerged, they carefully cloaked their arguments in legalistic terms, citing precedent and procedure. Only Simpson rose to Packwood's defense and said what many, including Democrats, believe: that "the reliability of such charges ... cannot be accurately judged at a tremendous distance from the time in which they were alleged to occur."

The problem is that Simpson then went on to oppose open hearings. Admittedly, it is hard to defend a lout. And Packwood is, if nothing else, exactly that. In 1983, he allegedly hit on a 17-year-old intern in her Bethesda home. "He laid a juicy kiss on my lips," the woman told *The Washington Post.* "I could feel the tongue coming." The evidence suggests Packwood is undaunted by rejection. On separate occasions, he purportedly smooched a hotel desk clerk, cornered an elevator operator and pleaded with a staffer to make love to him.

"No one wants to stand up on the Senate floor and seem to be defending such behavior, even when its only sin was being pathetic," said one GOP leadership aide. As a result, no Democrat or Republican asked whether the eighteen charges constitute sexual harassment, which is generally understood to include some expectation of quid pro quo, or simply the fumbling attempts of a groping buffoon.

"There's harassment, there's a hostile workplace and there's gender discrimination. They're not all the same," said Brand. The one person who seemed to understand this ambiguity was Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein. "Human beings are certainly not perfect, and there may well be mitigating circumstances," she said, casting her lot for open hearings. "But I think sexual misconduct, and particularly sexual harassment, is often misunderstood. It means different things to different people."

Packwood may have counted on his GOP colleagues to make such a defense, if not for philosophical reasons at least for practical ones. Republicans, especially Majority Leader Bob Dole, desperately want him to remain chairman of the Finance Committee, where he has been steering the contentious welfare legislation through the Senate. Senator Phil Gramm has seized upon welfare as a weapon against Dole in the race for the Republican

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presidential nomination. If Packwood loses his chairmanship, the man in line to replace him is Senator William Roth, who few believe has the political muscle to carry out the onerous task.

With this scenario in mind, Packwood cozied up to Dole all year, shedding his previous moderate tendencies and endorsing more extreme GOP proposals, especially on welfare. But ultimately this strategy failed. Whatever the value of Packwood's chairmanship, in the end Dole and the Republicans made a decision to protect themselves and, by opposing public hearings, left Packwood exposed to every allegation. "Whoever advised Packwood to oppose open hearings, I think, made a terrible mistake," said Senator William Cohen, one of only three Republicans to vote for public hearings.

Sensing that he had miscalculated, Packwood quickly went on the offensive after the Senate's vote, pleading his case on "Dateline NBC" and CNN. When this failed he called belatedly for open hearings. Many Republicans are irate that he has suddenly reversed course; now their opposition to hearings looks even more foolish. McConnell's office released a terse statement stating simply that the Ethics Committee would consider Packwood's request at their next meeting.

Whatever the committee finally decides, after so much partisan in-fighting, it will be difficult to dispel the widespread popular belief that the ethics process is a sham. Ironically, Republicans, embarrassed by charges of collusion, will be even more likely to vote to crucify Packwood than Democrats. And, if welfare reform passes in September, Packwood will be even less important to the GOP. Indeed, when the Senate finally votes on his punishment, Packwood may have more to fear from his own party than from his supposed enemies.

DAVID GRANN is executive editor of *The Hill* newspaper.

The GOP's flat tax obsession.

FLATLINERS

By Sheldon D. Pollack

Ever since the Republicans embarked upon their radical, Contract with America-inspired agenda last fall, pundits have predicted that they would overreach themselves, creating a political fiasco and backlash. So far, on welfare, abortion, Medicare and the budget, Gingrich and company have proven the doomsayers wrong. But those battles pale before the one emerging over the future of the federal income tax. Right now, replacing the current revenue system with a flat tax is the GOP's hottest—and riskiest—idea.

The opening shots in this battle were fired even before the November elections. In the summer of 1994 Republican Representative Richard Armey of Texas introduced a bill (grandiosely titled "The Freedom and Fairness Restoration Act of 1994") calling for a "flat tax" imposed at a uniform 17 percent rate. Armey's proposal, modeled on the flat tax first advanced by Hoover Institution economist Robert E. Hall and political scientist Alvin Rabushka, didn't get much attention at the time. But that was before the November 1994 elections and before Armey became House majority leader. The once eccentric-sounding Hall-Rabushka flat tax has since emerged as a serious legislative proposal.

Of course, fringe "tax protesters" have long questioned the legitimacy of the federal income tax—notwithstanding the fact that the Sixteenth Amendment and the Supreme Court settled questions over its constitutionality more than eight decades ago. But lately Armey and his fellow Texan Bill Archer have brought the anti-income tax movement into the mainstream. From his pulpit as chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, where all revenue bills originate, Archer has said that he wants to "rip the income tax out by the roots and throw it overboard."

On July 19, Armey (along with Richard Shelby of Alabama in the Senate) introduced a slightly modified rendition of the Freedom and Fairness Restoration Act in the 104th Congress. This latest version would phase in (over three years) a 17 percent flat tax on the wages and pensions of individuals earning more than $10,700 and of families earning more than $21,400. It would allow none of the traditional deductions or credits of the current income tax system except the one for dependents, and under the revised Armey plan the flat tax would be withheld from the wages and pensions of each individual taxpayer.

Businesses would be subject to the same 17 percent flat rate. Direct mailings by the business lobbying group Citizens for a Sound Economy proclaim the simplicity and "fairness" of the Armey-Shelby flat tax and boast that it would "reduce the individual income taxes of virtually all Americans." This is true, but mostly because the plan comes up around $200 billion short of revenue annually, compared to the current income tax system. Treasury calculates that a 25.8 percent flat tax would be needed to maintain current levels of revenue. Of course, at such a rate the flat tax would be a lot less attractive politically.

Though Armey's is the main flat tax proposal now before Congress, there is no lack of competitors. These days it seems that any congressional leader or would-be presidential contender needs only a few hours and some energetic staff members to draft an entirely "new" tax system. For example, last January House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt came out in support of a flat (or flatter) income tax, to be imposed at a 10 to 11 percent rate on all but the wealthiest 20 percent of American taxpayers.

Then, under pressure from leftist Democrats,

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The Only Busy Signal You Get From This Government Agency

Is The Sound Of People Working

It used to be a nightmare to call Ohio's Bureau of Workers' Compensation. Callers either got a busy signal or sat on hold for minutes on end. Thousands got so frustrated they just hung up. Government wasn't working for them.

But that was before the bureau involved its front-line employees in solving the problem. Because these workers deal with the public, they knew what was wrong and how to change it.

And change they did. In partnership with management, they overhauled the bureau's phone system. Busy signals went from 50,000 per month to 0. Delays dropped to a minute-and-a-half. A bureau that used to help 80,000 callers a year is now answering that many calls a month.

This is not an isolated reform. In Ohio they're changing how government works. Every agency and every office. It's part of a new labor-management partnership between the Governor and the state's 37,000-member public employees union, OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11.

One agency has already saved $304,000 helping troubled youth; another office saved 59,000 work hours by eliminating duplicate procedures; one garage team extended the life of its dump trucks by four years.

The Ohio program -- Quality Services Through Partnership (QSTP) -- shows how services can improve when front-line workers have a say in how the work gets done. Ohio Governor George Voinovich, a Republican, put it this way: "Without the partnership of our unions, QSTP would be just another flavor of the month."

Ohio's initiative is what successful corporations have been doing. Treat front-line workers as resources. Involve them in decisions. Empower them to meet the public's needs. Cut unnecessary management layers. Redesign the government workplace.

Taxpayers benefit. Services improve. Everyone wins. And when that happens, the only busy signal we'll hear from government is the sound of people working.

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For more information on how to redesign government and improve public services, call 1-800-634-0409. AFSCME in the public service

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Gephardt did an about-face and proposed five tax brackets with a progressive rate structure ranging from 10 to 34 percent. According to Gephardt's July 6 speech to the Center for National Policy, the revenue lost under his plan through the lowering of the top rate to 34 percent from the current 39.6 percent would be funded by drastically reducing "corporate welfare." This is familiar rhetoric. When pressed for details by reporters at his press conference for the proposed tax, Gephardt could only make vague references to going after corporations that avoid paying U.S. income tax by shifting income to foreign jurisdictions with lower income taxes. Lots of luck. Candidate Bill Clinton tried out such rhetoric. But as president he quickly learned that it's not so easy. Treasury has been investigating this complex issue for decades and still cannot come up with a scheme that works.

Presidential hopeful Arlen Specter, the moderate Republican senator from Pennsylvania, also jumped on the flat-tax bandwagon in what seemed an overnight conversion. The long-shot presidential candidate introduced a flat tax proposal that lamely copies Armey's bill. The only feature of Specter's proposal that distinguishes it from Armey's is its retaining of limited deductions for charitable contributions and interest on a home mortgage.

The most radical and least understood aspect of all the flat tax proposals is that they are really consumption taxes in disguise. The tax base of a "pure" consumption tax (the goal of the Armey plan) is an individual's annual income, less savings for the year. This is in contrast to an income tax that (to the dismay of most economists who want to promote savings) taxes annual income plus the return on capital (savings, for example). When you cut through the technical language, the end result is to tax an individual's net consumption for the year and exempt the return on capital investment (dividends and interest).

That might sound reasonable enough to economists, who bemoan the disincentives and inefficiencies that result from taxing the return on capital, but the effects of such a shift would be drastic. Savings—income not consumed—would no longer be taxed. Certain taxpayers, therefore, would benefit greatly. For example, wealthy individuals with high annual income but low consumption patterns (a rich miser such as the late Sam Walton of Wal-Mart or, perhaps, Bill Gates of Microsoft) would likely pay less tax under a consumption tax than under the current system—although their businesses would likely pay more.

Perhaps for this reason, a bill introduced by Senators Sam Nunn and Pete Domenici, as well as Senator Specter's bill, makes all kinds of exceptions to consumption tax principles so it doesn't look like their bills are taking from the middle class and giving to the wealthy. Most flat tax proposals retain at least some of the most politically appealing features of the income tax—some progressivity, the deductions for home mortgage interest and charitable contributions, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Still, a flat tax on the order of 17 to 20 percent will inevitably reduce the tax burden on the rich while increasing that of the middle class.

Most polls show widespread backing for a flat tax, but beneath this veneer of support lie powerful political constituencies who will fight it tooth and nail. Whole sectors of the national economy have grown up around, and depend upon, the kind of tax preferences that the flat tax would eliminate. Universities, museums and city orchestras all rely upon the incentives to charitable giving created by high marginal tax rates and deductions for contributions (for this reason, most flat tax proposals have already caved on the issue and kept some limited deductions for charitable donations).

Then there's the housing industry, which won't be likely to sit still and bear the kind of blow that repeal of the deduction would inflict. Hall and Rabushka argue that the loss of the deduction will be offset by the lower costs of borrowing which should result from exempting interest payments from taxation. Of course, if interest rates really plunge, after-tax rates of return on investment will too, thus defeating one of the main justifications for adopting the flat consumption tax in the first place—creating added incentives for savings and investment.

Likewise, state and municipal governments won't be thrilled to lose the special tax treatment now afforded to interest paid on their bonds. Since all interest will be exempt from taxation under the flat tax, tax-exempt state and municipal bonds will lose their preference. This could result in as much as a 30 percent drop in the value of portfolios of tax-exempt bonds. The economic upheaval that could ensue should give conservative Republicans pause.

House Republicans are presumptuous in thinking they can remake so much of federal fiscal policy all at once. In repealing the income tax, they will be moving into uncharted waters—no one really knows what the impact would be on much of the national economy. The political danger for the GOP goes well beyond the familiar charge that they are coddling the rich.

All these objections aside, how would we actually switch to a consumption tax? That simple question is one that proponents of the flat consumption tax cannot answer. Since all current national savings have already been taxed under the present income tax regime, it would be necessary to exempt these amounts from taxation under the new tax. Otherwise, the savings of all taxpayers (those of Mom and Pop, for instance, who have accumulated their lifetime savings to get them through their retirement years) would be taxed a second time—this is essentially a consumption tax, remember—as they spend their savings in retirement. But any set of rules that would allow taxpayers to identify their pre-"reform" savings for some grace period under the old income tax regime would be a nightmare of complexity. And exempting so much of the national wealth from the

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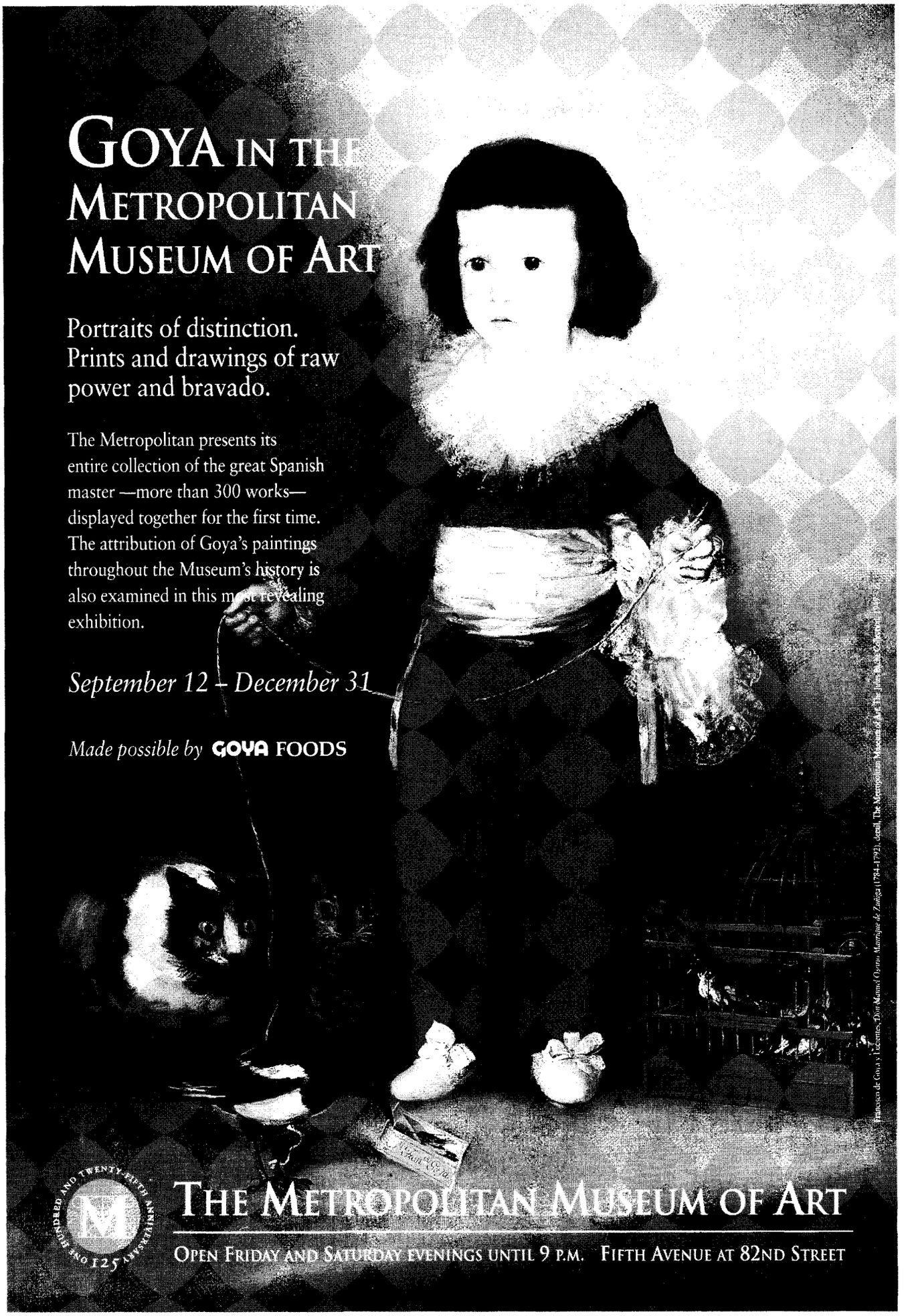

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consumption tax would obviate the very benefits the new tax regime is supposed to bring.

Boston University economist Laurence Kotlikoff, an ardent and well-respected proponent of a flat consumption tax, offers another reason why there should be no rules to avoid double taxation. Kotlikoff suggests that the older generation of taxpayers, who enjoy benefits far in excess of their contributions, has already reaped an economic windfall from the Social Security system. He has a point. Still, many people could be devastated by a double tax on their savings—and all out of proportion to the "excess" benefits they received in Social Security. In any event, the mere specter of riled-up seniors mobilizing their powerful political associations should be enough to dissuade members of Congress from embracing Kotlikoff's rough economic justice.

Will the 104th Congress pass a flat consumption tax? So far, few Republicans have raised much objection to the heady idea of abandoning the income tax system wholesale. But, as the flat tax proposals move beyond rhetoric into the congressional labyrinth, they will confront political reality.

A key figure in that confrontation will be Oregon Senator Bob Packwood. Packwood chaired the Finance Committee during the great tax reform effort of 1986. But he also contributed mightily to the distortion of the tax laws through countless special interest provisions, particularly those designed to benefit Oregon's timber industry. In 1986 Packwood was one of those (along with his counterpart on Ways and Means, Dan Rostenkowski) who took control of the radical tax reform movement generated by tax professionals in Treasury and sculpted it into a more moderate and politically viable package. He may do so again.

This past April and May, even before the Finance Committee began consideration of the House tax cut package H.R. 1215, Packwood held hearings on the flat tax, with both Armey and Specter testifying in support of their own proposals. Packwood needs to appear supportive of the flat tax now, since the scandal-plagued senator can hardly be seen as blocking his party's hottest idea. But Packwood, who understands the tax system as well as anyone in the Senate, can see the danger that a flat tax presents, and he may work quietly to gut it.

During Packwood's hearings, Finance Committee Democrats Bill Bradley and Carol Moseley-Braun made the traditional liberal case against the flat tax, calling it "regressive" and focusing mostly upon the perceived benefits to the "rich" of a tax rate that is a uniform 17 percent (or 20 percent under Specter's plan), as opposed to the present 39.6 percent maximum. Such familiar rhetoric from Democrats will not by itself sink the flat tax. Only when—and if—conservatives themselves grasp the enormity and risk of restructuring the entire fiscal organization of post-New Deal government will the flat tax bandwagon lose momentum. If they do not, the flat tax could very well become the Republicans' public policy debacle—the fiscal equivalent of the Clinton administration's ill-fated health care initiative. As Robert Reischauer, former director of the Congressional Budget Office, puts it: "It [tax reform] may look great from a mile away, but up close, it's a political minefield."

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Lugar's stealth campaign.

BLAND AMBITION

By Matthew Cooper

The rain kept coming. While Richard Lugar and his wife, Charlene, vacationed on Florida's Sanibel Island last Christmas, the tropical winds pounded the roof of their rental, sparing them the distraction of the beach and giving them more time to deliberate. "Are you going to do it?" Charlene asked. And with his four sons offering their assent, the 63-year-old senator decided that, yeah, he would seek the Oval Office.

President Lugar? The idea seems laughable. The GOP race is open, but it's tough to imagine the Republican Party, let alone the country, coming down with a case of Lugar Fever. Even friends of the stolid four-term Republican concede that his prospects aren't great. Former Reagan adviser Mitch Daniels, a longtime Lugar pal and fellow Hoosier puts it subtly: "I'd say he's realistic."

The most pressing question is not whether Lugar will be elected president, which is doubtful in the extreme. It's whether Lugar will win the mantle of the thinking man's candidate. In most presidential elections one candidate scores a reputation for thoughtfulness. In 1988 Bruce Babbitt set editorial writers abuzz with his straight talk about entitlements. Ditto Paul Tsongas in 1992.

For his part, Lugar enters the thinking man's battle with plenty of capital. Although he had the most pro-Ronald Reagan voting record of any senator, Lugar won praise from liberal editorial writers for leading the override of Reagan's veto of South Africa sanctions. And in 1986, as an election observer in the Philippines, Lugar made a prescient call to dump Ferdinand Marcos. Recently Lugar, as Senate Agriculture chairman, took on farm subsidies and was hailed by Budget Chairman Pete Domenici as one of the few committee chairs to cut seriously. And while he's pro-life, Lugar is no

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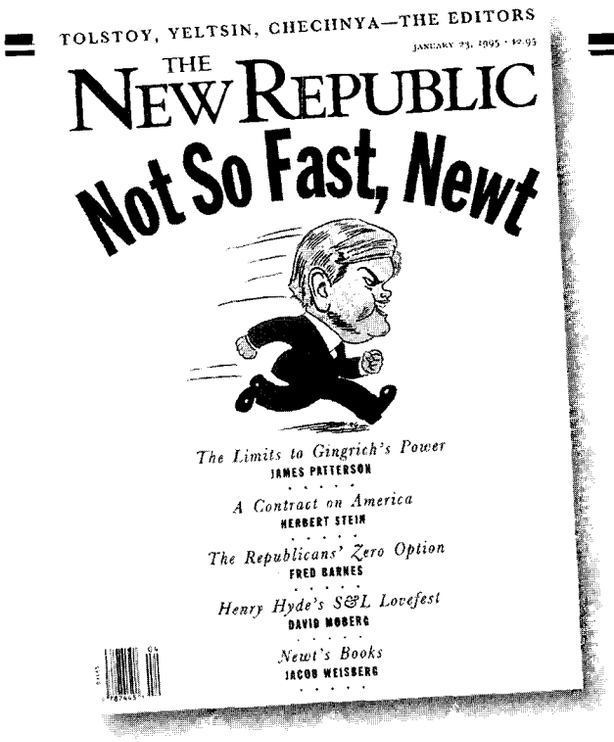

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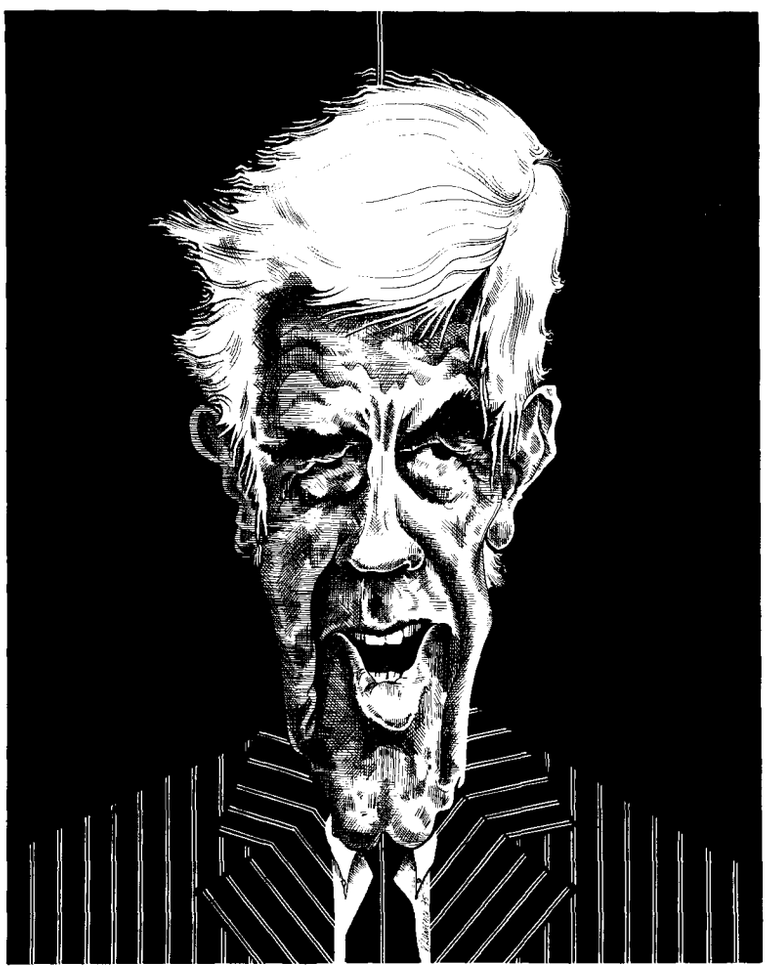
megaphone for the religious right. "He just doesn't like talking about abortion," says his childhood friend and former EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus.

On foreign policy, Lugar, a self-styled expert, backs NAFTA and offers the most intellectually honest Bosnia stance of any of the Balkan hawks. He would lift the arms embargo and put 100,000 NATO troops in the Balkans to contain the fighting. In late August, when most sensible souls escaped Washington, Lugar was Lugar—holding hearings on nuclear proliferation. When I met with him in the all-but-empty Hart Senate office building, he began by enthusiastically handing me a chart chronicling recent plutonium seizures. "The Harvard group at the Kennedy School has really done very good work on the problem," Lugar crowed. It's hard to imagine Phil Gramm saying that.



RICHARD LUGAR BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

It will probably be the way Lugar cools hot-button issues like race and immigration that most enhances his smart-guy image during the upcoming campaign. Lugar opposed the 1990 Civil Rights Act, but, unlike those affirmative action flip-floppers Bob Dole and Pete Wilson, he still supports some race-based programs such as his "Lugar Scholars" initiative—a private scholarship for Indiana students that Lugar founded and that is limited to blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. "Probably we should be looking at criteria of disadvantage more generally," Lugar explained. "But we wanted to make a statement that we thought very few Afro-American students, percentage-wise, were going to college in Indiana." He asks: "Is this affirmative action? Yeah, it is. And I'm in favor of it." On immigration Lugar says, "Let's not have an enemy of the month."

Lugar has a pedigree on racial issues. Elected as mayor of Indianapolis in 1967, the then-35-year-old Lugar was briefly considered for the vice presidential spot in 1972. (Friends admit that Lugar smarted when Reagan skipped over him in 1980 and again in 1988 when George Bush picked his junior Senate partner, Dan Quayle.) He earned applause for his response to the city's rioting in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination; and before it became the rage in urban planning, Lugar fused Indianapolis's government with that of surrounding suburbs, keeping his city's bond rating high and its tax base from collapsing.

All of this makes Lugar more interesting than he lets on. He could be the sunny, Jack Kemp-style Republican of this race, but he's so dull—duller than Kemp—that you'd never know. A question on the underclass yields a roundabout answer about the little-mourned Model Cities program; "I've managed a food-machinery business" is his idea of a good line. His campaign recognizes the dullness dilemma and will soon release a ten-minute video designed to show a spicier Lugar. It includes older shots—courtesy of Stuart Stevens, now Dole's media consultant—of Lugar down on the farm and, incongruously, a rhythm-and-blues soundtrack featuring Aretha Franklin's "Respect." Lugar Fever!

Besides his lackluster style, Lugar's other problem is that he's gone off the deep end on taxes. He'd scrap the income tax and replace it with a national sales tax. As a result, the moderate Lugar finds himself in cahoots with not-so-moderate sorts whose unabashed goal, says Stephen Moore of the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute, is not only to abolish the IRS but to annoy people with a sales tax so large that they they'll demand smaller government "every time they pay for a grape Slurpee." Lugar got the idea through Cato, which linked him up with one of the idea's chief proponents, economist Laurence Kotlikoff. When Lugar and Kotlikoff met at the Boston Harbor Hotel earlier this year, the senator was impressed. (Although Lugar, according to Kotlikoff, didn't bite on privatizing Social Security.) But critics are taking aim at the consumption tax idea. In a lengthy attack in the latest *Tax Notes*—Did you leave your issue at the beach?—economist Bruce Bartlett, who was hired by the Republican-run Joint Economic Committee to study a sales tax, calls the idea regressive. Lugar says his critics misunderstand the plan, but the

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charges are hurting him.

There's another issue on which Lugar may get into trouble: family values. Unlike Gramm and Wilson, Dole and Gingrich, Lugar has stayed married. (And unlike certain other candidates Lugar, a former Eagle Scout, also enrolled in the military after his Rhodes Scholarship.) This straight-arrow résumé is impressive, but Lugar may blow it by preening sanctimonious. Earlier in the race, he made a crack about divorced candidates; and he still invokes his own marriage in a none-too-subtle swipe at the other guys. Bad idea. Lugar's better off with his nice-guy persona. It may not lead to roars of "Lu-gar! Lu-gar!" at next year's convention. But it's the best thing he—and his legacy—have. •

The latest thing in welfare.

TOMMY'S NEW TUNE

By Mickey Kaus

This summer, as the U.S. Senate prepared to debate welfare reform, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson proclaimed a "dramatic break" in his state's welfare policy. Thompson had announced dramatic breaks before. In 1987, he hyped Wisconsin's experiment with "Learnfare," a relatively insignificant program that shaves the checks of welfare recipients if their teenage children don't attend school. In 1992, he appeared at a White House Rose Garden ceremony to inaugurate "Bridefare," a program that liberalizes welfare rules for parents who stay together—but only affects about 400 households. In 1993 came "Work Not Welfare," which cut off welfare payments after two years, even if recipients were willing to take public "workfare" jobs. Public jobs were "just another form of welfare," Thompson sneered. But this "landmark" plan applied only in two of Wisconsin's seventy-two counties.

So when Thompson, on August 3, announced "the end of the automatic welfare check," the national press largely ignored him. Only *The Los Angeles Times* made a fuss about his proposal, called Wisconsin Works ("W-2"). The trouble is, *this* Thompson plan really is a landmark. If it receives the attention it deserves, it could tip the balance in the current congressional argument over welfare.

To be sure, many states are attempting their own welfare fixes, a phenomenon the White House is eager to publicize (and take credit for). "[U]nder President Clinton's leadership," declares a press release from the Department of Health and Human Services, the states "have begun the move toward a new welfare system." Clinton, the release notes, has approved welfare "demonstration projects" in thirty-two states. A recent *New York Times* article bought this line, declaring that "many of the changes contemplated by Congress have already been tested in the states."

But this is highly misleading. Most of the experiments that have been approved involve relatively unrevolutionary changes, like raising the $1,000 limit on the assets welfare recipients can accumulate or fiddling with the rate at which they lose benefits when they go to work. The big reform, at the heart of the legislation now before Congress, is the institution of a time limit, either a Clinton-style limit (after which recipients must engage in workfare) or a cold-turkey limit (after which both welfare and workfare disappear). Neither sort of limit has been "tested," at least not on the single mothers who make up the vast majority of welfare recipients. Though some states have started time-limit experiments, none has been going on long enough for the limits to have been reached.

Even before such a test, though, it's easy to spot problems with the time-limit idea. Poor mothers are to be given a check, and then after a certain period of time—typically two years—the state will try to take it away. The temporary period of cash aid is supposed to give recipients time to get their act together. But it also muddles the message to young women who aren't yet on the dole. To some it might say "Welfare isn't permanent, so don't count on it." To others it might say "Have an out-of-wedlock child and get two years of benefits." And it's always harder to take a check away from someone than it is to not give it to them in the first place. Even the states undertaking the toughest time-limit experiments typically exempt large portions of the welfare caseload. Virginia's experiment, for example, limits benefits to twenty-four months but exempts about 40 percent of the caseload, according to a survey by the Center for Law and Social Policy. Massachusetts plans a very tight sixty-day limit (followed by workfare)—but this applies only to the 20 percent of welfare families whose children have reached school age. The welfare reform bill passed by the Republican House only requires states to get half of their welfare recipients working by the year 2003.

The new Wisconsin plan is different. To the vast majority of families seeking aid, it doesn't offer *any* period of cash assistance. The time limit, in effect, is zero. If you're poor and need immediate help, you can get a "bridge loan." But you'll have to pay it back starting the next month. If a loan won't solve the problem, you'll be matched with a private job or offered a community service job, plus child care to enable you to take that job. The general principle is "no cash, only work." Yes, mothers can get cash support for the first twelve weeks of their child's life. But that's all. Those certified as disabled (but who for some reason don't qualify for federal disability benefits) will also get cash assistance, but a state official estimates that no more than 15 percent of those who apply for aid will qualify for this "W-2

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Transitions" program. Even these disabled recipients will be required to do some work, in special "sheltered workshops" if necessary.

In one sense, the W-2 plan is harsh. Single moms with 13-week-old infants will have to take a job if they have no other means of support. But it's because of this unyielding message that W-2 can be expected to have a large effect on the culture of ghetto poverty. Young women will no longer have out-of-wedlock babies and then go on welfare—forming non-working non-families—for the simple reason that this will no longer be possible.

In another sense, W-2 is ambitiously generous. Essentially, Thompson is promising a job, plus child care, to *every* poor Wisconsin parent who walks in the door. If he can't find you a private job, he'll give you one of the public, workfare jobs he once sneered at. That will require a lot of public jobs, and a lot of child care. One estimate, from inside Thompson's bureaucracy, is that about 30 percent of W-2 applicants will need workfare jobs—about 15,000 to 20,000 people. Far more will need child care, since Thompson promises to subsidize this service for all working families making less than about $20,000—even those working in the private sector. Oh, and one more thing: W-2 guarantees health coverage to "all families with low incomes and with low assets."

How is Thompson going to pay for all this, especially if the Republicans in Congress succeed in replacing open-ended federal welfare payments with a fixed "block grant" to each state? That's the key question about W-2. One reason many states find time limits appealing, after all, is that they avoid the expense of offering jobs and child care immediately to all comers.

Thompson's advisers apparently expect the number of Wisconsinites seeking support to fall dramatically once people realize they can no longer get cash without working. That would free up money to finance jobs and day care for the remainder of those seeking aid. In Fond du Lac, one of the two counties where Thompson imposed his trial two-year time limit, caseloads dropped 40 percent in a single year, well before anybody hit the two-year wall. Those who would have gone on welfare seem to have found private jobs instead, or moved. But Fond du Lac is a largely white area with low unemployment and no "inner city." It may be wishful thinking to expect a similar result in the ghetto culture of Wisconsin's major urban center, Milwaukee. One suggestive bit of evidence: over the eight years since Thompson began his reforms, the caseload outside of Milwaukee has declined by 41 percent; in Milwaukee the rolls have shrunk only 6 percent. If Milwaukee's impoverished residents can't find private jobs, and line up to claim the public jobs W-2 has promised, will Thompson step in and fund them even if it means doing it with state, not federal, money? Even if it means raising state taxes?

Thompson has yet to announce the cost of his plan. But his press secretary has already been quoted as saying that unless Congress provides a big enough block grant, W-2 will have to be cut back. That's a bit galling, since it was Thompson who pushed the idea of block grants in the first place, over Democratic warnings that they wouldn't be generous enough. If Thompson *can* afford W-2 under the Republicans' block grant regime, that may only be because Wisconsin does relatively well under the formula for allotting the grants. Under the Senate GOP's block grant bill, Wisconsin will get $1,589 for every poor child in the state (mainly because, historically, Wisconsin has paid out high welfare benefits and received generous federal "matching funds"). But what about Texas, which, even after winning a change in the allocation formula, will only get about $447 per poor child? Simply put, in the block grant system Thompson has championed, states like Texas won't be able to undertake the W-2 style reform Thompson himself now thinks is necessary. Of course, that will only make Thompson look better.

There are other problems with Thompson's scheme. W-2 limits public service employment to two nine-month stints. What if someone still can't find a private-sector job? Perhaps Thompson will make generous use of a provision allowing further public employment, in times of recession, on a case-by-case basis. Or perhaps willing workers will wind up on the streets. Thompson's plan also depends heavily on the just-expanded federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which makes private sector work more attractive than either welfare or workfare. Yet Republicans in Congress are now busy attacking the EITC.

Still, it's hard to deny that Thompson's proposal gives new credibility to the GOP push for welfare block grants. The best argument for the block grant approach has always been that it encourages state-by-state experimentation. Thompson's radical plan might radically shrink the underclass. But it might be a disaster. There is only one way to find out, and given the risks it's probably better to find out in one state than to impose such an experiment on the entire nation.

The most widespread objection to welfare block grants cites the danger that, offered a fixed federal payment, governors would compete to spend as little as possible on the poor. States, the argument goes, will be happy to experiment by cutting recipients off, cold turkey. They might be happy to tinker with the system while essentially maintaining the status quo (since it's relatively cheap to just send people checks). But no state would want to spend its own money for a work-based system that required lots of expensive child care and public jobs.

Now, though, at least one state says that, if the Republican bills pass, it will try the tough-but-expensive approach. Thompson's W-2 initiative hardly removes all the objections to block grants. (Some governors might still respond by ending all aid to the poor. And why not give those states that mandate work a federal guarantee of sufficient child care money?) But W-2 should undermine a major argument against the Republican reform. If anybody notices. •

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PHILANTHROPICAL CORRECTNESS

By David Samuels

Tuxedoed waiters glide through the lobby of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art bearing silver serving trays on whose oval surfaces repose, like the answer to a problem in geometry, dozens of round-mouthed glasses of dry white wine. One by one the glasses are gratefully plucked from the trays by the program officers of America's foundations. They are gathered here on the final, gala night of the Council on Foundations's annual conference, "Philanthropy and the Public Good."

Drinking wine, snacking on a multicultural assortment of canapés from America, Japan, Mexico, China, Italy and France, the staff of America's foundations offer a pleasing testament to the vision of the council and of its departing president, James Joseph. It is a vision that, in Joseph's words, will combine "the civic habits of the Iroquois" admired by Benjamin Franklin, "the Afro-American passion for justice," the "neo-Confucian" respect for benevolence and giving, the brotherhoods for mutual assistance established by Latinos "as early as 1598" and the traditions of "Native Americans, who engaged in giveaways." The staff of America's major foundations are male and female, black and white, Asian and Hispanic, in their 30s and 40s. Among them circulate perhaps 400 foundation trustees, mostly male, ten to fifteen years older, whose erect carriage and well-modulated voices testify, in a genial, unhurried way, to the life-enhancing effects of giving away large sums of money.

In the past twenty-five years, the assets of American foundations have more than tripled, to stand at $189.2 billion. Last year, they gave away approximately $10 billion in grants. The offices in which foundation staff work range from the blandly corporate to the Ford Foundation's modernist masterpiece in Manhattan—two blocks from the U.N.—with its twelve-story atrium and transparent glass walls that, on a sunny day, transform the gray canyons of midtown into glorious, shimmering wallpaper. Most remarkable of all are the terraced indoor gardens, a dense green jungle four stories high, suggesting a dream dreamt by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and executed by Mies van der Rohe.

The dream embodied by the Ford Foundation's soaring glass walls and by its 300 employees, who gave away $285 million in grants last year—a mere fraction of the interest on Ford's $6.7 billion endowment—is the dream of an America remade according to the blueprints of the best and the brightest. Foundations embody, in institutional form, the noble dream that has lifted the hearts of American liberals since the days of the young Walter Lippmann, of the nation as a vast laboratory for the reasoned programs of the elite. Charities, churches and synagogues might feed and house the hungry and the homeless. The task of foundations like Ford is different: to launch programs that carry public policy in new and uncharted directions, to benefit the whole of society.

In the decades following the Second World War, foundations served as leading instruments of the liberal consensus, using their position at the intersection of the elite worlds of government, politics, academia and the press to remake America in their own progressive image. Foundations funded, in whole or in part: the early expansion of our system of public libraries, Jonas Salk's discovery of the polio vaccine, the writing of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, the Public Broadcasting Corporation, the "Grey Areas" project that led to Model Cities, and the Michigan study that yielded Head Start. Other, less successful, foundation efforts—Ford's meddlesome financing of radical black activists in Bedford-Stuyvesant, for example—are best forgotten. What was striking about the foundations of the '50s and '60s, however, was not so much the merit of their ideas as the extent of their influence. John Gardner, president of the Carnegie Corporation from 1955 to 1965, served as Lyndon Johnson's Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, taught at Harvard and MIT, worked at the FCC and founded Common Cause. McGeorge Bundy, president of Ford from 1966 to 1979, was a former dean of the faculty of arts and sciences at Harvard and national security adviser under Kennedy and Johnson. With years of experience and contacts throughout interlocking worlds of the elite, Gardner and Bundy conveyed their ideas to academics, editors, members of Congress and presidents and, in many cases, saw them enacted into law.

What is most striking about American foundations today, however, is the absence of ambitious—and ulti-

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mately successful—undertakings like Head Start, the Salk Vaccine or PBS from the thousands of projects, pilots, reports and commissions they annually sponsor. Asked to name a foundation-sponsored project of the last twenty-five years that has had a significant impact on American society, Council President James Joseph shakes his head. "There are many good programs," he says, "but as for the kind of program you describe, a Head Start or a PBS, I can't think of one."

Of the major players in the foundation world—Ford and Carnegie included—none has proved more influential in standardizing professional practices and in setting a common multiculturalist agenda for foundations big and small than the Council on Foundations. To wander the halls of the council-sponsored conference in San Francisco is to see the cartoon pages of William Bennett and Dinesh D'Souza brought spectacularly to life. When not attending the conference sessions—which range from "Philanthropic Courage: Promoting an Agenda of Genuine Inclusion" to "The Colors of Desire: A Multimedia, Multicultural Performance"—participants can eat, drink and make new friends at receptions sponsored by any one of the council's influential "affinity groups": "Native Americans in Philanthropy," "Asian Americans in Philanthropy," "Hispanics in Philanthropy," "Women in Philanthropy" and the "Association of Black Foundation Executives." Or they can relax in the Marriott screening room and watch some of the many foundation-sponsored videos, reflecting the great and increasing interest among foundation staff in sponsoring film, performance and other alternative media projects. The screenings include: "Look Who's Laughing" ("Six Comedians with Physical Disabilities Talk About Their Lives"), "Meeting Ancestors" ("An Indian Tribe in the Amazon Shares a Camcorder with a More Remote Tribe") and "Saviors of the Forest" ("Two Hollywood 'Camera Guys' Set Off to Save the Rainforest and Become Involved with Greenpeace and a Host of Environmental Activists and Sustainable Harvest Entrepreneurs").

If Michael Ovitz is unlikely to come calling at the Marriott anytime soon, neither are supporters of more traditional public arts like fiction, poetry, music or ballet. Where the Ford Foundation of the 1950s and '60s spent its money on efforts to promote writing and scholarship at major universities and on symphony orchestras and ballet companies in dozens of American cities, Ford today spends its money on arts projects designed to "promote tolerance and social understanding" and ensure "access and equity." The adoption of such goals has led to what might otherwise seem like a puzzling artistic emphasis on documentary films by little-known film-makers—and at Ford. "As a video artist," Simone Farkhondeh explains to readers of the 1994 Rockefeller Foundation Report, "I am convinced that it is important to continually critique the media's powerful yet limited images of many in our society.... In my experimental documentary, I illustrate the multifaceted lives of Iranian women." Whatever the worth of such programs, Rockefeller's stated emphasis on "cultural diversity" in funding for the arts is a far cry from the goals set out by the foundation in its annual report of 1968, where it boasts of having "enabled such leading writers as Ralph Ellison, Wright Morris, and Philip Roth to continue and complete novels; poets W.S. Merwin and William Meredith to continue their work; Eudora Welty and Richard Taylor to complete books of short stories; Kenneth Burke and Josephine Herbst to write scholarly works." If Newt Gingrich truly believes, as he has stated, that private philanthropies can and should supplant government in providing for the public good and promoting lasting art, he is in for something of a surprise.

Multiculturalism is one reason that foundations no longer set America's social policy agenda as they did in the 1960s. The other is that they have exempted their recipients from the scholarly outside review that used to give them credibility with policymakers. The tens of thousands of grant proposals that pour into foundation offices every year are sorted by program officers. It is they who decide which of these programs their foundation will sponsor. "There is no application form," Ford advises its prospective grantees, who are requested to provide program officers with information about their objectives, programs, budgets and the qualifications of persons engaged in the work. Most program officers are generalists who often hold degrees from bureaucratic training grounds like the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton or the Kennedy School at Harvard. Few have any special expertise or experience in the fields in which they make grants. Says Waldemar Nielsen, author of *The Big Foundations* and a program officer at Ford for almost two decades, "In the end, when there's no real way to determine whether your project has succeeded or not, you write it up for the annual report: 'We have set elementary education on an entirely new course.' "

One obvious antidote to the lighter-than-air atmosphere that often permeates foundation work is the strict evaluation of programs by outside researchers and academics. Head Start, the last foundation-sponsored project to have resulted in a major public policy initiative, was exhaustively evaluated by researchers, whose conclusions were accepted by politicians and the public. As researchers writing for an audience composed in part of other social scientists, academic recipients of foundation largess were forced to put the pilots and models they devised into falsifiable forms that could be attacked—or accepted—by their peers. What the academy offered foundations was more than a promise of expert knowledge or a reassuring association with Harvard or Yale. It was, above all, the power to convince others that the solutions they advocated might work, that they represented something more than the wishful thinking of those within foundation walls.

In the past twenty-five years, however, a startling shift in foundation funding has occurred, away from research and toward the support of advocacy groups

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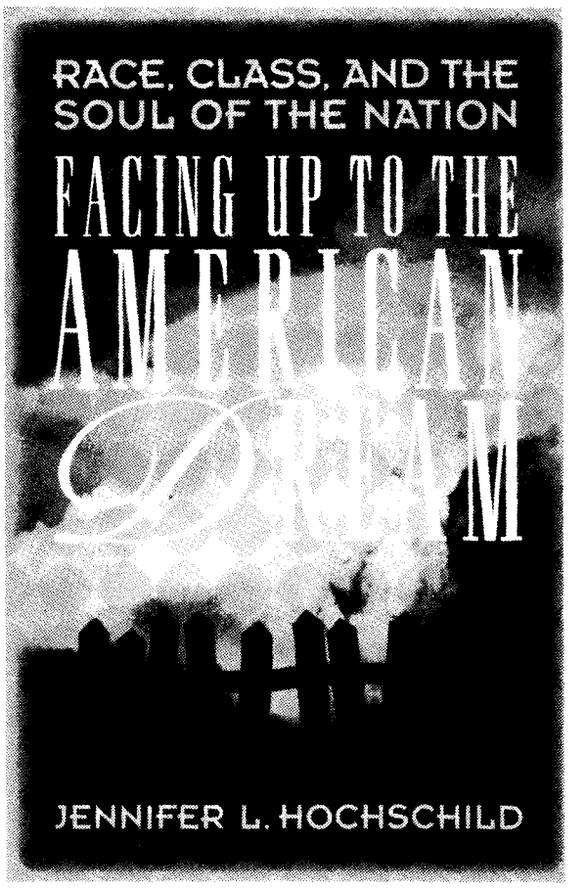

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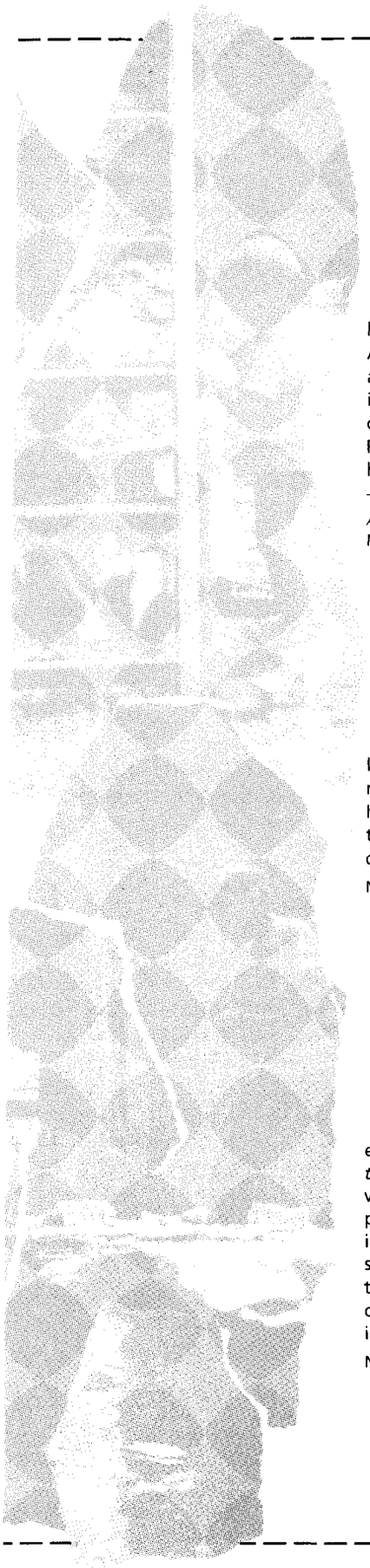

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and the kinds of social service programs best accomplished by government and private charity. Of 240 grants made by the Carnegie Corporation in 1989, totaling $37 million, only 27.5 percent (sixty grants) went to American universities. Most were relatively small, and many went to non-research oriented projects such as an "international negotiations network" at Emory University's Carter Presidential Center, or "Reprinting and Disseminating the Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity Through Education and the Sex Equity Handbook for Schools." Most of the Carnegie grants fell into one of two categories: funding and disseminating a host of high-flown reports by Carnegie-sponsored commissions; and funding advocacy groups including the Organizing Institute, the International Peace Academy, the ACLU Foundation, the National Council of La Raza, the Fund for Peace and the Children's Defense Fund. It is the stuff of which Republican careers will doubtless be made: a multi-billion-dollar tax exemption for the political agenda of liberal elites.

Those who share the broader social concerns of the foundations might wonder as well whether doling out hundreds of millions of dollars to ideologically driven advocates—who lack the time, the training or the inclination to evaluate what they do—is the best prescription for future innovations in public policy. Foundations enjoy their present tax-free moorings because they claim to operate as a nonpartisan force dedicated to the pursuit of innovative solutions to our pressing social ills, sheltered from the shifting partisan winds. The preponderance of foundation grants to advocacy groups, however, suggests that foundations are less devoted to the reasoned pursuit of the public good than to the multiculturalist dogmas propounded by their staff.

To read the foundation reports of the '60s is to enter a very different world. Of 128 grants, $12.2 million in all, made by the Carnegie Corporation in 1965, for example, 53 percent of the total (sixty-eight grants) went to American colleges and universities, from the Bank Street College of Education to Harvard, to pursue research and to set up pilot programs that would influence our practical understanding of the built environment of cities, of teaching, of police work, of the low-wage economy, of state and local government and of other aspects of society for decades to come. (Nearly all of the remaining grants went to universities abroad for similar goals.) In 1968, under Bundy, Ford devoted 17 percent of its $203 million to grants designed to promote research and education. Of the 33 percent of the foundation budget devoted to its international programs, most went to universities. The 31 percent devoted to national affairs included grants of $3 million each to MIT, Chicago and Harvard, and more than $4 million to Columbia to come up with ways of easing tensions between black urban communities and the police, an effort which resulted, in part, in reforms that have become popular under the heading of "community policing."

By contrast, the Ford Foundation Report of 1994 reads more like a guide to the professional advocacy industry, with grantees including the Ms. Foundation, the Women's Legal Defense Fund, the National Women's Law Center, and the Institute for Women, Law and Development as well as the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and the National Council of Churches of Christ. Only thirty-eight of 100 grants given under the rubric education and culture went to universities; most went to local community colleges.

No longer subject to academic review, evaluations of foundation programs today are carried out by foundation staff and by grantees themselves. Certainly many of these recipients are worthy and well-intentioned. The trouble is that, under the new system, it's almost impossible to evaluate what actual good they do. One recipient of major foundation grants, an educator in a Northeastern city who refused to allow his name to be published, described the process with a cynicism that appears to be general: "They think they're being clever by asking you to come up with your own criteria for success—60 percent of children in the eighth grade will be reading at a ninth-grade level in two years, or whatever. And they ask you to select an 'independent evaluator' to report on whatever progress has been made. It's all very numerical: but the goals you select are always goals that you know you can reach. Maybe 60 percent of eighth graders are already reading at a ninth-grade level. Maybe it's 70 percent. The foundations don't know. And the evaluators you select are people with a stake in the project. They're getting a salary—from you, or an organization related to yours; some part of their income comes from that grant. And so the project is evaluated, declared a success, and everyone—the program officer, the trustees and you—can go home happy."

Over the past twenty-five years, the men and women who staff America's major foundations have become a tight-knit world unto themselves. The columns of *The Foundation News* regularly track the progress of foundation staff from one foundation to another. "The Nord Family Foundation in Elyria, Ohio," one recent announcement reads, "has named David R. Ashenhurst executive director. Ashenhurst held positions with the Pew Charitable Trusts, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International." Nearly 40 percent of foundation CEOs now come from the nonprofit sector; according to the Council on Foundations nearly 30 percent are hired from within their own foundations. As hirings from within increase, the quality of leadership has declined. If McGeorge Bundy's name remains familiar to many Americans, the name of his successor at Ford, Franklin Thomas, is little known outside the foundation world. Thomas's successor, Susan Berresford, has spent her entire professional life in the service of Ford. It is possible that, like Mikhail Gorbachev, she has spent decades nurturing secret, sweeping plans for reform. However, with no independent experience in government, industry, academia or the media, she will be hard-pressed to put any bold new

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plans she might have into practice. Was there a better choice than Susan Berresford? We will never know, since Berresford was selected to head the $6.7 billion Ford Foundation, America's largest and most influential, without even the formality of an outside search. It's hard to imagine any other American institution of comparable size and influence—Harvard, Yale or the Ford Motor Company, for that matter—selecting its leader without at least a polite nod to the world outside its walls.

Because foundations are unique among our major institutions in their freedom from public scrutiny over their finances, programs and decision-making processes, it is impossible to say with certainty how or why they chose to fund certain programs and decline to fund others. A conference "site-visit" to the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, however, offers a glimpse into the minds of the program officers who determine what programs their foundations will pursue. "Long considered the underbelly of downtown," the conference program explains, "the Tenderloin suddenly became a family neighborhood when thousands of immigrants and refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos arrived after the Vietnam War. Arriving also in the 1970s and 1980s," it adds, "were hundreds of activists and millions of foundation dollars."

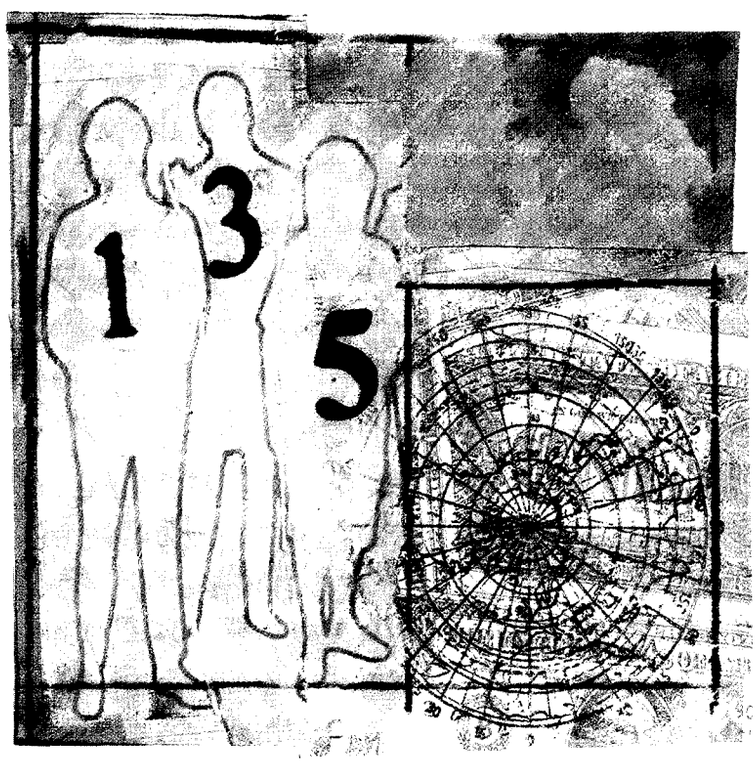

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM PRESTON FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

We are all eager to escape from the Marriott, from the disorientation and lethargy induced by the glare of artificial lights and the absence of clocks or windows. Not even the presence of the uniformed security guard on the sidewalk alongside us, nor the mumbled offers of "sniff, grass, joint," nor the shouts of "motherfucker" from a wandering vagrant in a pink foam-rubber baseball cap can dampen the spirits of the group. What the Tenderloin needs, according to surveys of its residents, is an active police force, more jobs and small business loans. What it gets from foundations and other sources are grants to build housing, parks and community centers, big-ticket items whose sheer physical presence is often enough to convince program officers—and their boards—that they are doing good work. On our way to visit a local housing development corporation we pass Boedekker Park, a handsome facility built by the city of San Francisco at no small expense. It offers sturdy benches along well-paved pathways situated to take maximum advantage of the available space for trees and grass. There is a playground for children, which at noon, in a district whose population includes more than 2,000 children, is empty. The park, however, is occupied by aimless men in their 30s and 40s holding brown paper bags and leaning drunkenly from the benches. As I stand and watch, a man in a tattered plaid shirt leans over, vomits, leans back and closes his eyes.

A small knot of well-groomed children between the ages of 4 and 10 has gathered on the sidewalk outside a building run by the Indo-Chinese Housing Development Corporation (IHDC), the only Indo-Chinese-run nonprofit housing corporation in the Tenderloin. In the building's dark, well-ordered basement, the IHDC's executive director, Bill Ng, a mild-looking man in his 40s, addresses a pitch for funding to the foundation staff. Behind him, like a scene from some long-ago civics class, sit a row of his tenants in their Sunday best. "I want you to think about these people and the wars, the beatings, the tortures, the murders they escaped in order to come here," Ng says, "and then I want you to think about how they are living now and raising their children, with the crime, the drugs, the fear and the violence. Ask yourselves this question: Are they really better off?"

Ng's voice cracks, and he seems a little unnerved. Before him, after all, is a foundation man who could, on the spot, write out a check for thousands of dollars. "Are you better off here?" the foundation man asks one of the tenants, an older Cambodian man who smiles in a friendly, dignified way as he waits for the question to be translated. He hears, nods and replies. The translator shrugs. "He is very happy to be an American."

"But is he better off here than where he came from?" the foundation man asks again. As the question is translated, Ng shifts uneasily from one foot to another, with the expression of a man who, glancing down at his cards, realizes too late that he may have overplayed his hand. "He says he is better off here," the translator says. "He says he has two children in college, one at U.C.-

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Davis and one at Santa Cruz." As the tenant beams, Ng is plainly beside himself. It's not the old man's fault, but he has just given the worst possible answer. After all the talk of beatings and tortures, calculated to make the foundation people feel that the tenants are victims deserving of aid, the old man has to go on about his children in college. That the old man's children have made it out of the Tenderloin to the safe harbor of college might, in a universe very different from the one that program officers inhabit, be taken as a sign that this poor community is able to make the best of its obviously limited resources, that the dollars invested here would be dollars well spent. But what the foundations really want to hear, as Ng knows, are not tales of success but failure. If only the old man's children were on crack instead of in college! Instead of pursing their lips and exchanging disapproving glances—as they are doing now—the program officers would be moved, to tears perhaps, and the mighty waves of foundation dollars would come rolling in.

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM PRESTON FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Bill Ng's other problem is that all his tenants are Asians. What program officers value most in the projects they sponsor is the appearance of "multiculturalism," that is, the joint participation in housing, recreational and employment projects—not of Laotians, Vietnamese and Cambodians—but of officially sanctioned racial groups: Asians, blacks and Latinos. "The problem for me had to do with the lack of other groups at the table," one program officer, a young white woman with a shoulder-length bob, says later. "Too narrow," says another. "I was left wondering about the indigenous population," says a program officer from Chicago, using a term that in the foundation world is commonly used to refer to blacks, Hispanics and other residents of poor neighborhoods such as the Tenderloin.

Indeed, the ideologically driven pursuit of "diversity" and "inclusiveness" is perhaps the one area in which today's foundations are influencing public policy with anything like the force of their powerful predecessors of the '50s and '60s. To say that foundations influence policy, however, is not to say that the pursuit of "diversity" and "inclusiveness" they advocate is succeeding in our poor, multiracial cities. Exactly what happens when foundation-bred "inclusiveness" schemes are put into practice is disturbingly illustrated by a conference session titled "Realities of Multiculturalism: Barriers and Opportunities for Public Housing Tenants." Moderated by Diane Bermudez of the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, a small San Francisco-based foundation, the session, whose message starkly contrasts with the rest of the conference's, is clearly intended as a reality check for the well-dressed program officers in attendance. The session is devoted to the origins and the progress of a lawsuit brought by the Asian Law Caucus in response to a 1992 San Francisco HUD decision to "integrate" public housing by moving black families into predominantly Asian projects and vice versa.

One of today's panelists, Don Bonus, is a Vietnamese college student whose family was moved into the predominantly black Sunnyvale project by San Francisco HUD and was forced out by fellow tenants in 1993.

"The first day it was nice and everything," Bonus recalls. "The next day, when we were moving furniture in, people started harassing us, shouting, 'Go home, Chinaman.' We were harassed every day. People shot at our apartment and broke all the windows. It would take days to get the windows replaced. When we went outside we'd get robbed. We called the cops, but the cops would not show up to protect us." According to Gen Fujioka, the lawyer who brought the lawsuit against HUD, the incidents were part of a pervasive pattern of racially motivated harassment and violence that first came to the center's attention during Christmastime of 1992, when Asian tenants were beaten up in their apartments in the middle of night in what sounds suspiciously like an organized pogrom. "We went to the housing authorities," Fujioka recalls, "and they told us these were not racial incidents. The best we can do, they told us, is get them out."

Panelist Roberta Achtenberg, former assistant secretary of HUD and chief fair-housing enforcement officer during the years this peculiar drama was played out, has only sympathy for its victims. Achtenberg, now a candidate for mayor in San Francisco, blames "local HUD officials" and "a lack of resources" for the disaster.

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The violence, she says, could have been avoided if HUD officials had instituted "potlucks or sleep-overs for groups that are not familiar with each other.... Those kinds of things are easy to do." And no doubt they are. Yet the belief that HUD's pursuit of "diversity," based on integrationist models developed for blacks and whites in the 1960s South, failed for lack of "potlucks" or "sleep-overs" is a symptom of the same delusion that led HUD to embark upon the scheme in the first place. It is a delusion to which multiculturalist foundations contribute mightily: namely, that "community" and "civil society" refer not to the groups people form of their own volition but, instead, to the carefully integrated groups of well-fed, well-dressed black, white, Hispanic and Asian children who play so happily together in the pages of major foundation annual reports.

That poverty in America is caused by racism and can be eliminated through education is one of the fundamental assumptions of the liberal politics American foundations so effectively promoted in the '50s and '60s. It has become increasingly difficult, however, to see America as a prosperous country, a minority of whose citizens are denied the right to vote or to work on the basis of their race. We are, instead, a prosperous country in which a well-educated, relatively well-integrated, professional elite rules over a poor and angry majority whose anger has made itself felt from the slums of L.A. to the plains of Oklahoma.

That the problems of the poor in America are, most often, the problems of poor whites is a fact not recognized by any speaker at any session at the conference in San Francisco. What is billed as "A Study in Immigration Backlash" in Marin County's Canal Area, however, appears to offer some hope: that hope does not last long. "These are the white homeowners," our tour guide intones. "Notice how wide and clean the streets are and how nice and big the houses are." The residents of these modest tract-homes, with ten-year-old Cutlass Sierras and Toyota hatchbacks parked outside, it turns out, are the enemy.

At the Pickleweed Park Community Center, Tom Peters of the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services explains his opposition to Proposition 187 to an approving audience of foundation staff. An older man from Texas stands up: after stating his own strong opposition to Proposition 187, he wonders whether illegal immigration might pose a real problem for the state of California. "We must oppose the scapegoating of welfare mothers, gays and lesbians," answers a young woman from the audience, in grim, declarative tones. "The rights of our so-called 'illegal immigrants' must be firmly protected." Staffer after staffer agrees.

Despite this show of unanimity, a dissenter—of sorts—can be found in our midst. As we leave the Marriott, our bus driver takes up the microphone. Passing lightly over local landmarks, restaurants, the Fire of 1907, she arrives at the subject that will occupy her, without pausing, for ten minutes at least: the San Francisco earthquake of 1992 and the role played by the media in defaming the city. "It was the media, the reporters, the TV people, who showed those buildings burning, the same three buildings, crawling over the rubble, flying over in helicopters," she says. "Everything was fine. But the media just wouldn't let up. They caused all the problems, all the bad feelings, by showing those pictures, week after week, the fires burning and buildings collapsing."

There is no escape. We slump down in our seats, roll our eyes. If we ignore her, maybe she'll stop. What is she so mad about? Later that day, I meet Beth Smith, president of the Hyams Foundation of Boston, a prim, attractive woman in her late 40s on whom Henry James might have modeled a character much like his sympathetic Dr. Prance in *The Bostonians*. After Smith tells me about the programs she sponsors, I ask her whether the Hyams Foundation serves poor whites. "It's funny you should say that," she says, "because just last week I was listening to NPR, and I was surprised to hear that two of the poorest Census districts in the country, with average incomes of about $9,000, were in Boston and that both of those districts were white." That's when an explanation for our bus driver's behavior occurs to me: in our suits and ties, polished penny-loafers and leather pumps, with our college degrees and secure, well-paying jobs, we are—in her eyes, at least—the media. We are the elite, and we are to blame.

In her conspiratorial imagination of a malign elite, our angry bus driver is hardly alone. From C. Wright Mills to Barry Goldwater, voices on the left and the right have long protested that America is run by an elite whose members have been said to include the leadership of both major parties, the Rockefeller family, the Ford Foundation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, bankers, academics and the press. A look backward, to the years when American foundations supported *An American Dilemma*, the civil rights movement, Head Start, even Model Cities, suggests that the conspiracy theorists are at least half right: there was an elite. It succeeded by pursuing strategies designed to ensure the civil rights of all Americans, while assuming the economy would take care of itself.

The new American elite is wealthier, better educated, more diverse. That it has failed so completely to build on the successes of its predecessors is the ruling irony of our national life. Unique among our institutions for their unlimited wealth, ability to bridge professional divisions and freedom from partisan constraints, foundations are more guilty of this failure than most. With the federal government burdened by debt and liberal ideals held in fierce contempt by the governing majority in Congress—and by the public that elected them—the need for fresh solutions to our social problems is more pressing now than at any time since the Great Depression. Blinkered by their self-imposed regime of philanthropical correctness, America's major foundations are unlikely to be of much help. •

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

What Difference?

The long-awaited independent evaluation of private management in Baltimore public schools came out this month. It shows that the millions of extra dollars Baltimore taxpayers spent on schools managed by Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), got them nothing more—and maybe a little less—than they got from any other district schools. EAI promised to produce "immediate" and "dramatic" gains in academic achievement. But at the end of three years, the only difference between the EAI schools and other city schools is the profit carted off by the Minneapolis-based firm.

Given EAI's current program and track record, the results are not likely to change.

The new evaluation deserves close public attention because it is the first in-depth examination of EAI's management record by an outside research organization.

The researchers, who are from the Center for Education Research at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), spent last year examining test scores and other data from the seven elementary schools in EAI's group of nine schools, and comparing them with seven other Baltimore elementary schools. In addition, they conducted surveys and interviews with parents, principals, and teachers at all the schools and evaluated their responses to questions about the academic program, physical facilities, books and supplies, and learning climate of each school. The researchers also rated the interior and exterior physical condition of the schools. Here is what they found:

- No difference between the EAI schools and the comparison schools in overall educational "effectiveness."
- No difference between the EAI schools and the comparison schools in the general condition of the grounds, security features, maintenance efforts, interior halls and offices, and classrooms.
- No difference between the EAI schools and the comparison schools, according to surveys and interviews with parents and teachers, in such school characteristics as school pride, safety, classroom learning environment, level of homework, student enthusiasm, parental involvement, and professional development programs. No difference in parent ratings of school cleanliness and adequacy of books and materials.
- No difference between the EAI schools and the comparison schools in the impact of technology on learning. The researchers concluded that EAI's touted computer-assisted reading program did not produce any measurable success in two years. On the other hand, they found that the comparison schools had also made significant investments in classroom computers to provide students with access to new technology.
- No difference between the EAI schools and the comparison schools in the progress of students in reading and mathematics over the three years of EAI management. EAI students actually slipped in reading relative to both the comparison schools and city schools overall; and in math, EAI students advanced a little but so did the comparison group and students citywide.

School officials even switched the rules in the middle of the game, perhaps to try to make the EAI test scores look better. In the first year of the EAI program, they chose a group of schools that were like the EAI schools for purposes of comparison. Then test scores at the EAI schools nose-dived, while scores at the comparison schools—and at all other city schools—continued to rise. So for the UMBC evaluation, officials replaced some of the comparison schools with lower-scoring ones, including the only elementary school in Maryland that has been targeted for state takeover. But even the new comparison group did better in reading over the three-year period than the EAI schools, and just as well in math.

In other words, EAI students have not improved their poor performance among students in the district at all, even though EAI was given $18 million more to run its program than the city otherwise would have spent on those schools.

The study does not provide a financial analysis of EAI's work in Baltimore, so there is still is no independent examination of the firm's money management. But the UMBC researchers conclude on the basis of their observations that the promise EAI made to improve learning without spending more than Baltimore already was spending "has been discredited." They also charge that EAI's "management expertise" has not measured up to the firm's boasts. And they criticize EAI for spending too much time on "test preparation" when academic improvement efforts should emphasize instruction in core subjects.

Baltimore leaders apparently view the UMBC study as positive enough to keep EAI on for another two years. They are, however, renegotiating the terms of the contract to add tough performance requirements and decrease the amount of money the firm can receive per school. But given EAI's current program and track record, it is not very likely that the results will change. EAI will just keep skimming as much profit as it can for as long as it can, and kids in EAI schools will end up about where they started—behind.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Beyond Belief

Fate has teased John Boorman. This English director was endowed with brains, talent, high ambition, but something was left wanting. His power of judgment is in inverse ratio to his ambition. The higher he aims, the weaker his clarity and control become. This, on Fate's part, was a scurvy trick.

When Boorman makes films at the level of *Having A Wild Weekend*, a breezy romp, or *Point Blank* and *Deliverance*, tight and violent tales, they come out well-shaped, organic, true to themselves. When his pictures reach higher, they wobble. *Leo the Last*, intended as a sort of poem about aristocracy moving into a new age, was an amorphous blur. *The Emerald Forest*, meant to dramatize the destruction of primitive nobility in Brazil by crass civilization, so adulated its thesis that it forgot to cohere. *Hope and Glory*, Boorman's quasi-autobiographical account of a London boy living through the Blitz, was streaked with treacle. Now, with his new film, Fate's omission of the gift of adequate judgment has hurt Boorman grievously. Again he has chosen an important subject; but his discrimination is so weak that the result is a mechanical, trite movie.

Beyond Rangoon (Castle Rock) is about Burma, now called Myanmar, a country oppressed for years by a murderous government. One of the miracles of hope in our gloomy time is that, in this country, arose Aung San Suu Kyi. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her heroic opposition to the military junta, she has recently been released from house arrest; though still in danger, she refuses to leave her country because she feels that she can be of use where she is. Against this background, a terror that still grinds and a heroism that still shines, Boorman tells a claptrap story—yet one more account of an Occidental for whom the East serves as a spiritual gymnasium, who gets embroiled in Asian troubles and comes out at the other side a reconstituted person.

The last time we saw this pattern was in *City of Joy*, where a cynical American doctor, Patrick Swayze, got involved with poor people in Calcutta and found his soul. In Boorman's film the protagonist is again an American doctor, this time Patricia Arquette, whose life is listless because her husband and small son were murdered by thieves back home. Taken on a tour of Southeast Asia by her sister in 1988, she gets entangled in Burma's troubles and finds a purpose in life. How lucky we anomic Westerners are that Asia is waiting, right over there, with a menu of both problems and philosophies to nourish us. A few months, a few risks, and home we go reinvigorated.

The screenplay by Alex Lasker and Bill Rubenstein tells us very early that we are in for a contraption. Arquette returns to her Rangoon hotel one evening with her sister and other tourists and their guide, all of whom are to leave the next morning for Thailand. That night Arquette hears commotion in the streets—marching, shouting, soldiers—and instead of remaining indoors rationally, in which case there would be no movie, she goes out and wanders through the mêlée. She discovers the spirit of revolt in the land. She sees Aung San Suu Kyi (played by an actress) facing down soldiers. Also, though she doesn't find out until the next morning, she has had her passport stolen.

So the next day, when her sister and the others leave, she can't go with them. (What a surprise in a picture called *Beyond Rangoon.*) She must get a paper from the U.S. Embassy to clear her for exit. She does, but she must wait a day for a plane. Then she encounters a kindly, sagacious old Burmese tour guide who says he can take her on an expedition outside the city and have her back by nightfall. Does she get back then? Guess. If you need to.

The old man's car breaks down. He and Arquette spend the night with some former students of his—he is a discharged professor—who are opposed to the government. Suddenly they all have to flee an army raid. Arquette gets more and more enmeshed in troubles through her friendship with the professor and his friends; and, like all protagonists of comparable films who have previously led sedentary lives, she behaves as if she has been in such a film before. She is physically competent, decisive, swift.

The professor himself is no slouch at adaptation. Early in the film he is shot in the chest, yet he survives a car crash with Arquette, swims around in a stream with her, hides from soldiers in reeds, goes on a raft journey after Arquette—*so* luckily—finds drugs and bandages for him, then safely crosses a wooden bridge under fire to Thailand. (His daughter and granddaughter just happen to be waiting for him on the other side.) The hardy old professor has a touch not only

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of Buddha but of Schwarzenegger.

And the dialogue! How could Boorman, himself a writer, have tolerated it? One instance: when the raft bearing Arquette and the wounded professor docks at a village, she says to a peasant—in English, of course: "Is there a pharmacy in this town?" It's the sort of question that Groucho, as Captain Spalding in a pith helmet, might have asked a native.

Yet there's a certain cruel congruence here in such dialogue. It's unbelievable but so is Arquette throughout. With an uninteresting face and the most superficial, clichéd responses to everything that happens, she seems to have been cast in the role because she can run. Over and over Boorman's camera rolls along next to her as she runs somewhere.

Just to make sure that he hasn't overlooked any possible ingredients, Boorman includes an attempted rape. And he also makes sure that his cinematographer, John Seale, gets in a couple of calendar shots of sunset and sunrise as the raft moves downstream.

Now, all these crudities—of plotting, of dialogue, of acting—would simply be run-of-the-million with other directors, but with Boorman they take on another tinge. We can believe that he was genuinely committed to this subject. But, possibly because of pressure from money people along with that previously demonstrated flabby judgment, he ends up with an "at least" picture. "At least, no matter what, I'll get something about the Burmese horror on the world's screens." But his film shrinks that horror to a plot gimmick.

Boorman is the co-editor of that excellent film periodical *Projections*, and in the very first issue (1992) he published a 115-page journal of his activities in 1991. Called "Bright Dreams, Hard Knocks," it chronicled his travails that year in making, or trying to make, films. He concluded:

> Coming to the end of this journal and, reading it over, I am conscious that I have left a lot of loose ends dangling, but that just happens to be the way things are, for the real world does tend to lack dramatic shape. Perhaps that is why it is so hard to find endings for movies.

Not just endings. From the very beginning of *Beyond Rangoon* Boorman underlines heavily the difference between film form—conventional form, anyway—and reality. •

What the prohibitionists don't understand about tobacco.

Smoking and Nothingness

By Thomas W. Laqueur

I.

Like Roger Marbecke, who in 1602 wrote one of the earliest and most spirited defenses of tobacco, I should begin by declaring myself immune to the allure of nicotine. "Mine owne particular fantasie and affection" is "in no manner of way tied" to tobacco. I "did never take it at all, or else, verie seldom." Therefore I "may be held as a most indifferent judge of the matter," and also of books about it. But if, as Richard Klein persuasively argues, smoking is not only a physical act but also a cultural practice, then none of us is innocent.

Smoking is an act in which physiology and meaning intersect, individually and collectively. And so policymakers, including the president of the United States, must grasp what they are up against. They must appreciate the power and the complexity of the object of their prohibitionist energies. For tobacco is a genuinely mysterious thing, as its history, and the history of its interpretation, demonstrates. Its mystery must be respected

Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence
by Jordan Goodman
(Routledge, 288 pp., $17.95 paper)

Cigarettes Are Sublime
by Richard Klein
(Duke University Press, 210 pp., $21.95)

Tobacco and Shamanism in South America
by Johannes Wilbert
(Yale University Press, 294 pp., $16)

Thomas W. Laqueur is a professor of history at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Harvard University Press).

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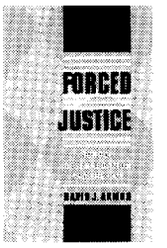

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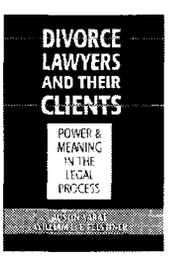

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before it can be solved, though one looks in vain for such complicating truths in the contemporary debates.

"Despite warnings" the clouds of smoke continue to spread, the May issue of *Scientific American* warns ominously, in a typical example. A full-color picture of a man's face is blown up in grotesque closeup and mysteriously half-veiled, like a nineteenth-century harem slave, by a haze. (This is the only hint that something puzzling is going on.) Inside, an article called "The Global Tobacco Epidemic" documents that the incidence of cigarette smoking has stopped declining in the United States and is actually rising in the rest of the world. A billion people persist in a practice known to be deadly. Unable to acknowledge that these people might have some important cultural stakes in the matter, or that their actions are a consequence of their wills, the authors blame capitalist subterfuge and state neglect for this transnational outbreak of false consciousness. In other words, people are being conned into using tobacco, especially cigarettes, by the aggressive marketing of the merchants of death, while governments stand by and leave their citizens unprotected from corporate predators and from their own desires. Worse, many states actually encourage the international tobacco trade.

Of course, there is some truth in such an analysis. Tobacco use *is* up. And so is cigarette advertising by American companies. Jordan Goodman documents its growth from $47 million in 1939, to $500 million in 1975, to $1.9 billion in 1983; and *Scientific American* takes the story to $5 billion in 1992, a fourfold increase in real terms in seventeen years. Governments, moreover, have historically been loath to tax the golden calf into extinction. As the Farmers General in eighteenth-century France discovered on its way to an almost eightfold increase in revenues (from 4 million livres in 1717 to 30 million livres in 1789, at a time when a worker's wage was 350 livres a year) raising taxes too much reduces consumption and the consequent revenue to the state, enriching only the smugglers spawned by high prices. "I will certainly forbid it at once," said Napoleon III of the vice that brought in 100 million francs a year, "as soon as you can name a virtue that brings in as much revenue."

But a purely economic analysis will not suffice; and neither the incitements of J. Walter Thompson nor the cynicism of governments are the causes of the "epidemic." Long before advertising, and in the face of ferocious opposition, in fair weather and foul, tobacco use has always been epidemic. Even in the pre-Columbian "Americas," as Johannes Wilbert shows in his exquisitely researched and informative book, *Tobacco and Shamanism in South America*, there is a divergence between the geography of naturally occurring *nicotiana* (where it grows wild but is little used) and "the man-effected distribution of the cultivated species and their immense cultural relevance." Before it conquered the world as part of the expansion of global capitalism after the sixteenth century, tobacco had spread from the Andean highlands and the southern cone of South America to the rest of the subcontinent.

Wherever and whenever one looks, in the aftermath of that fateful day when some Native Americans offered some of Columbus's sailors a smoke, there is more of the weed when one looks again. Thus, to the alarm of many, China is today leading the pack, so to speak, in the rate of annual increase of cigarette consumption: 11 percent a year. But this is a very old story. The Chinese smoked 1.25 billion cigarettes in 1902 and more than a thousand times as many, 1,500 billion cigarettes, in 1988. (That is 100 billion meters of cigarettes a year, by my calculation, or about 2,000 times around the equator.) And the problem was not the invention of the cigarette, though its vastly increased availability after the invention of the Bonsack rolling machine and the building of the American Tobacco Company by James Buchanan Duke in the 1880s certainly expanded tobacco's markets. (That is another tale of the expansion of the market in complicated interaction with human desire.) Tobacco was introduced into China sometime during the reign of Wang-li (1573-1619). By the late seventeenth century, it was a national habit. Prohibitions of various degrees of severity did nothing; offenders, as the Emperor Tsung Ch'eng complained, indulged in their passion privately. Opium smoking, moreover, grew spectacularly in the wake of tobacco in China, but nowhere else. Another mystery.

Everywhere and in all places the story is the same. There were no cigars made in the United States in 1800; 200,000,000 were made in 1860; 4,000,000,000 in 1890. One can choose figures more or less at random from Goodman's fine compilation and from other sources. Some figures are more reliable than others, and all probably underestimate the magnitude of production; but the trends are not so subtle that statistical lapses need bother us. The trends are, indeed, screamingly obvious. As the economic historian Jan de Vries has shown, for example, Dutch domestic tobacco production grew from nearly zero in 1600 to 15-17 million pounds (most of it bound for the Baltic) by the end of the century; 12,000 acres of land were devoted to the crop. Meanwhile hundreds of Dutch workers in Gouda (of cheese fame) produced, at the rate of 1,000 to 1,500 a day, hundreds of millions of the disposable clay pipes (the "quintessential throwaway product—the Bic lighter of the seventeenth and eighteenth century") for a European-wide market. In 1639, the Chesapeake exported 100,000 pounds of tobacco to England; by 1700 it was sending 37,000,000 pounds annually; by the second half of the century the yearly average stood at 76,000,000 pounds with a peak of at least 100,000,000 pounds in 1771. A thousand-fold increase in a little over a hundred years.

The numbers are equally spectacular, to take a final example, if one looks at the highly profitable barter economy between Portuguese colonials trading the third grade of tobacco, unappreciated in Europe, from the Bahia region of Brazil and slavers on the Mina coast of Africa. (This does not count the first grade of tobacco, which went to Lisbon at the rate of 5.5 million pounds in 1698 and almost 12 million pounds in 1784.) Around 1700, 160,000 pounds of tobacco were traded mostly for human cargoes; 2 million by 1720; 4 million by the middle of the century.

So the tobacco "epidemic" was genuinely worldwide. The fact that it did not respect the distinctions that Europeans held so dear was noticed early. A Dutch traveler, Steven van der Hagen, reported from his voyage to Africa in 1597-98 that "so popular did tobacco become with the ignorant blacks that they exchanged their most valuable possessions ... for the leaves of the plant." "Ignorant blacks" is less an expression of racism than an acknowledgement of the unnerving boundlessness of tobacco, its leveling quality, which has been a source of anxiety and relief from the start. "In all places where it has come," wrote Sir Hans Sloane in the late seventeenth century, it "has very much bewitched the inhabitants from the most polite Europeans to the barbarous Hottentots." Priests in sixteenth-century Mexico were forbidden (futilely) to smoke because it tied them too closely to the Indians' pagan habits; James I argued that we might as well go naked or prefer glass bubble to gold, as the Indians do, if without blushing we imitate these "slaves to the Spanish" by smoking. Nineteenth-century anti-tobaccoists were still complaining that "while the good works of civilization ... advance so deplorably slowly, this fetid herb borrowed from the naked aborigines of the world of the New World has overrun the whole of

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the Old World in the space of three centuries."

All this before cigarettes, which made smoking truly universal. It may be, as Richard Klein puts it in *Cigarettes Are Sublime*, that cigarettes do constitute "the only decisive advance in the knowledge of pleasure that modern [i.e., nineteenth-century] culture had achieved over antiquity." Certainly the ascendancy of cigarettes breathed new life into old meanings. The connection between tobacco and gender, for example, always lurking in the background, became explicit. Women smoking and women's liberation have been intimately linked, everywhere, from the 1890s onward. It was the independent, brazen, unattached, uncontrolled, politically demanding woman who lit up delicate little white straws of tobacco. (The general connection between tobacco and moral collapse is much older: George Fox complained in 1651 that his Quaker co-religionists had started taking tobacco and "were grown light and loose.") Thus the London matron who after the Great War warned that girls smoking in the streets are "the straw which reveals the direction of the wind" finds echoes in Shanghai during the roaring '20s and in contemporary Tokyo.

Cigarettes also produced a new democracy of smokers. Sartre developed an entire philosophy of smoking; and the bums of Paris, like the Nuer tribesmen with their rich vocabulary for all aspects of the cow, had an elaborate language to distinguish the varieties of cigarette butts. Soldiers share cigarettes with comrades and offer them to prisoners; the executioner gives them to the condemned. Indeed, the dried leaf of *nicotiana* has been the nearest thing to a universal gift that mankind has evolved. Cigarettes appear at the apex of an enormous pyramid of exchange: the latest manifestation of a luxuriantly protean cultural practice.

And from the very beginning, too, the "epidemic of tobacco" has been blamed on the greed of capitalists—or on the devil, who has been associated with the magic of capitalism. Unable to acknowledge the power of their fellow creatures' desire, the anti-tobaccoists finger some form of seduction, historical and personal. The theme of "Third World" vulnerability appears already in the early seventeenth century: the ignorant Turks, Sir George Sandys claimed, consume tobacco foisted on them by merchants who couldn't sell the stuff in London. (We call this "dumping.") "I know there is an exceeding great gain to be gotten thereby," complains an opponent of tobacco in 1616, in an effort to explain the contemporary success of smoking.

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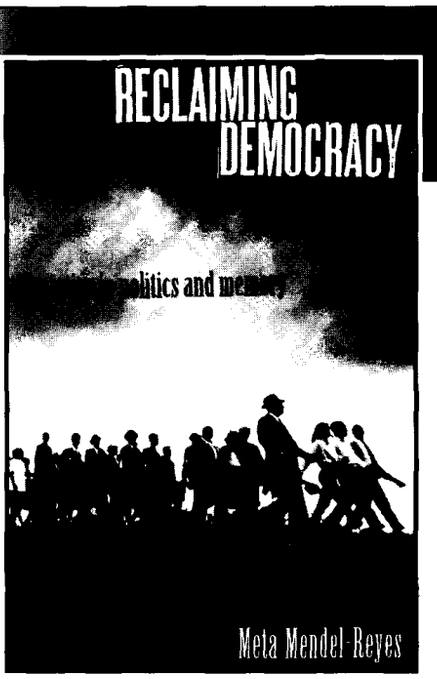

Meta Mendel-Reyes, teaches Political Science at Swarthmore College, and was a labor and community organizer for over 15 years, beginning with the United Farm Workers in 1974.

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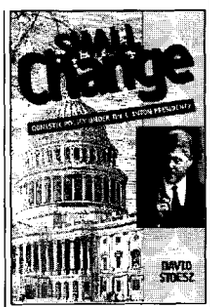

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"Sensible of the vast Quantity of tobacco yearly imported into Europe," purely "for the sake of gain," argues a near contemporary, the tobacco merchants "impose upon us." It has never been a secret, in sum, that there is lots of money to be made—by merchants, by growers, by the state—from tobacco.

No aspect of tobacco has a longer history, or has been more thoroughly documented, than its medical and psycho-pharmacological qualities; and nowhere is historical amnesia more threatening to serious thinking about the subject. In 1950 Morton Levin, who died at 91 this July, and until his retirement in 1959 was director of Cancer Control for the New York State Department of Health, published the first major study that definitively linked smoking to lung cancer. This was perhaps the only genuinely new discovery in the long history of how tobacco hastens death. It was missed by several centuries of medicine for several reasons. For a start, the problem may well be new: people now live long enough to develop lung cancer, and cigarettes, owing to the manner in which their tobacco is cured and the manner in which they are smoked, probably are more dangerous than cigars, pipes, snuff or chew. Moreover, currently available statistics and analytical techniques allow for a more precise assessment of risks than would have been possible earlier. Modern epidemiology and data-gathering make the details more precise—or apparently more precise—than in former times. Thus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us that in 1990 exactly 4,509 man-years of potential life and 2,009 woman-years of life were lost in Alaska due to smoking. At the other end of the scale, 290,416 man-years and 207,881 woman-years were not lived that year in California.

The neurochemistry of nicotine's psychological and physiological effects are known in more detail today than ever before. Still, to each age its due. What tobacco in its various forms did to the body has been known—and praised and condemned—in the language of its time since Columbus. That tobacco contains a drug, or is a drug, is without doubt the most ludicrous "discovery" of our day. Tobacco's main entry into European elite society was precisely by the pharmacopoeia. Indeed, Goodman argues with a little oversimplification, this is how the New World weed gained entry and acceptance by the Old World. From the Indians, the Spanish learned that it made hunger and thirst more bearable; and it seemed to make work easier. It was a drug of the poor and belabored. It was also the drug of more contemplative men.

Tobacco somehow concentrated the mind. The word got out: "a good companion for sedentary men and students when they are stupefied by long reading or working," wrote a seventeenth-century English observer. Long before the lions of Montparnasse sang the praises of cigarettes, it was said about smoking that it "dissipates the vapour that clouds the mind." Long-noted pleasures, such as the satisfaction of nicotine after a meal, were discovered in the nineteenth century to be the consequence of the drug's capacity to increase gastric secretion. And, of course, the central function of tobacco use among the South American Indians, more important even than exchange, recreation or sociability, argues Wilbert, was the production of trances.

Tobacco was a hallucinogen. Mixing different sorts of tobacco (that is, varying the types and the amounts of nicotine content), ingesting it in different ways (direct and indirect smoking, chewing, drinking, smoke swallowing, gastrointestinally via enemas and so on) produced different narcotic effects. These methods were all highly elaborated before 1492, a knowledge in some measure passed on by the Spaniards. (This knowledge, too, is curiously universal. A letter from the 1930s to the associate curator of the Herbarium at the University of California at Berkeley reports from the deserts of central Australia that the writer had recently discovered *N. excelsior*, the giant tobacco, growing there and that "it is used as a narcotic by the natives.")

Our own FDA's sudden "discovery" that tobacco is addictive is another anticlimax. Bartolome de Las Casas, the friar who accompanied Columbus and wrote in defense of the Indians, is quoted in all three of the books under review to the effect that when he reproved some sailors for smoking "cigars" they replied that "they were not able to stop taking them." Christians have become "much attached to this plant," came the complaint from Brazil already in 1517; and by the middle of the century there was the scandal of a bishop who was relieved of his see because without smoking "he could not live." (Smoking was, on and off, an excommunicable offense for the clergy until the eighteenth century.) James I, in his famous *Counterblaste* on tobacco, observed that a smoker can no more forbear tobacco without "falling into an incurable weakness" than "an old drunkard can abide to be long sober." "Continual custom" have rendered them "*habitum, alteram naturum.*" In short, addicted. "Many light their pipes ... even before getting out of bed so that not an hour should pass without smoking," a Leipzig physician complains fifty years

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later. And so on, and so on, and so on.

With the exception of lung cancer, almost every adverse effect of tobacco use had been noted well before the advent of mass-marketed cigarettes. Sir Francis Bacon was perhaps the first to argue that smoking by pregnant women caused birth defects. The dangers of secondary smoke—what we call "passive smoking"—have long been debated, and its effects were known to the Indians. (The Cuna Indians, in what is now Panama, in the sixteenth century and still today, smoke by inhaling fumes blown into their faces by another.) The British Parliament recognized the health hazards of being in the presence of smokers in the Railway Bill of 1868, which mandated smoke-free cars on British railways so as to prevent injury to non-smokers. That the first puffs of smoking tobacco caused nausea, that continuing smoking caused hoarseness, shortness of breath, bad breath, foul teeth, impairment of the sense of smell and thus of taste, cancers, coughing: all this, too, was commonplace. And the cardiovascular dangers of tobacco were already the subjects of whole books in the eighteenth century.

The study of the physiological effects and chemical composition of the "essence of tobacco" was well underway when two young German medical students, Ludwig Reimann and Wilhelm Heinrich Posselt, wrote their prize-winning Heidelberg dissertations in 1828 announcing the chemical composition of the pharmacologically active alkaloid "nicotine." (It is named for Jean Nicot, the French ambassador to the Portuguese court in Lisbon who sent seeds of the New World plant that he had obtained from Brazil to the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici.) Reimann and Posselt's extensive literature review on the effects of tobacco goes back to 1665, when an experimenter gave two dogs differing amounts of "tobacco oil" in the veins. The one with the smaller dose was not much effected; the one who got eight or nine drops in the veins was "deathly ill" but recovered. This in addition to anecdotal evidence: the seventeenth-century huntsman who died after ingesting a few drops of tobacco essence, the eighteenth-century smuggler who died after moisture from tobacco leaves under his clothing leached into his skin.

Reimann and Posselt carried on a series of horrendous vivisections. One poor greyhound lay strapped to the operating table, without anesthesia, as the boys noted that putting nicotine straight on its sciatic nerve did not seem to have remarkable physiological effects, though the piteous beast "bellowed and seemed

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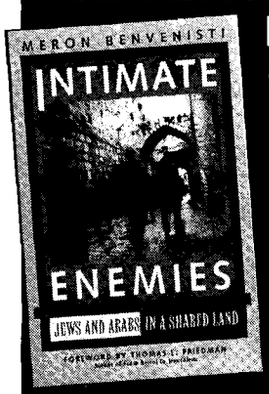

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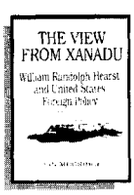

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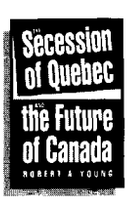

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to be in excruciating pain." No surprise here. A dachshund mercifully died almost instantly after half-drops of nicotine were injected into its jugular vein: spasms and labored breathing after eight seconds, apparently painful cessation of breath after thirty seconds, heart beat at a rapid rate for another minute. Other animals absorbed the stuff more slowly through broken flesh while the changes in heartbeat and breathing and so forth were noted. Somehow, still more studies revealed, animals seemed to use up the stuff; in any case the experimenters were unable to effect changes in a second beast when it was injected with the fluids of the first animal that they had killed with tobacco. Nicotine, Reimann and Posselt concluded, is "dangerous poison," akin in its cardiovascular effect to digitalis. (The study of the chemistry of tobacco's many other components kept pace with the rapid development of the field during the nineteenth century and was widely reported in the professional literature and the popular press.)

The interest of the state in the health of its subjects, in protecting them from harm, was the pretext for intervention at least as far back as James I, who, as "Physician of the Body Politick," sought to dissuade his subjects from "drinking this noxious fume." And the frustration of doctors that nobody seemed to be listening to all these well-documented warnings is almost as ancient as the evidence itself. Simon Paulli, in Latin in 1665 and then widely translated, ended his tome on the dangers of tobacco in a tone of resignation: "But, if People will still obstinately indulge themselves in the use of the noxious Plant, all I can do farther, is to warn of the danger." Two centuries later, in 1875, the author of a better-documented treatise concluded with the sort of pious hope that persists to our day: "I have steadfast hope that the word of science is now too powerful to be despised or its warnings neglected by the masses."

None of this is lost on the smoker, the chewer, the taker of snuff. As Klein says, everyone who lights up "probably intuits the poison from the instant of experiencing [its] violent effects," and the same surely can be said of those who take their toxin by other means. Why, then, did something so awful conquer the world so quickly?

II.

Goodman's answer to this question, and more generally to the question of why people continue to resist giving up the greatest health hazard ever documented, is "the complexity of its cultural signification." This is the right sort of answer. Culture is where we must look. Tobacco is, and has been, intimately entwined with the lives of millions. (In addition to the billion smokers in the world, more than 100 million people are directly supported by tobacco growing and distribution.)

But Goodman's treatment of "cultural complexity" does not address the deeper puzzle of the dazzlingly swift Old World acceptance of the New World product and of the continuing, universal desire that sustains it. Thus, for example, he explains why tobacco and not, say, coca became the world's drug of choice by pointing out that "the Europeanization of tobacco in the sixteenth century involved offering tobacco as a herbal panacea rooted firmly within the European medical tradition ... incorporation was virtually automatic." It is true that tobacco was initially treated, in the Galenic humoral view of the body, as a warming and drying agent. But surely this did not make its acceptance "automatic."

Such a view of cultural appetite is too scientific, too intellectual, too straitened. It overlooks the pleasure principle. For contemporaries were not oblivious to the remarkable attractiveness of tobacco as a recreational drug. Nobody ever needed the excuse that tobacco was "good for you." There is no such utilitarian thinking in the sixteenth-century paeans to the "divinity of tobacco" or in the seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of pipe-smoking conviviality. As Goodman shows, snuff "accommodated itself perfectly in a complex of new drugs," such as tea, coffee and chocolate, which were enjoyed by men and women in coffee houses and other novel retreats in the late seventeenth century. It is no wonder that cane sugar, that other delicious pillar of the international economy that emerged from the Renaissance, was the only real competitor to tobacco for the vanguard of a world revolution in desire.

It is easy to point to this or that historical contingency to explain why tobacco took hold here or there, why one form of consumption became attractive in this market and not in that market. It is also easy to explain why no state succeeded, or really wanted to succeed, in suppressing tobacco, despite draconian punishments that opponents occasionally put into force (such as execution with a pipe reamed through the nose, to take a gruesome example from seventeenth-century Muscovy). The explanation is money. But none of these explanations explains the human depth of the attraction, its entanglement with the modern psyche. Historical contingencies of the sort adduced by Goodman only make

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matters more mysterious.

The reason most often given for the persistence of the tobacco epidemic, the reason heard frequently these days as critics and officials look for regulatory solutions, is that tobacco is addictive. Researchers produce torrents of papers showing that rats, mice or other hapless laboratory creatures manifest symptoms of withdrawal when taken off regular nicotine hits. And so we humans, the argument goes, allow multinational companies and their villainous advertisers to manipulate us. And since we, like our distant rodent cousins, cannot resist so seductive a poison on our own, the state must protect us from it.

One part of this otherwise silly argument is true. Nicotine is, and has always been known to be, a highly addictive substance. The rest Klein disposes of with exemplary economy. Addiction explains nothing. After all, millions of people choose to stop using tobacco and billions never start using it. Moreover, the problem is to understand the nature of "the benefit or pleasure" from a drug that they know to be injurious, that made them sick when they first used it, that continues to make them feel at less than peak form. We need to know what accounts for the attraction in the face of these widely acknowledged torments. Calling it an addiction is an empty moral gesture. Tobacco—and Klein is brilliant in his analysis of the aesthetics of cigarettes, the fine, little, uniform white tube, the delicate puffs of the smoke, the magical insubstantiality—is far more than the sum of its chemicals.

The real question is why cigarettes "attract the undying loyalty [love, passion] of billions of people dying from the habit." We are not here in the presence of reason, or a utilitarian calculus; we are in the presence of something outside the ordinary. The first step in understanding the mystery of tobacco is to acknowledge the reality of its unreason, to "remystify" smoking, to reveal "the god behind the unrelievedly evil mask that cigarettes have assumed," to recognize what the Elizabethan poets already knew to be true of tobacco: its divinity. Strictly speaking, Klein argues, smoking is sublime: it is aesthetically compelling, like the vision of a grand storm or a yawning chasm or a wild beast, because it offers an experience of negation, of vulnerability, of something awful and shocking, of something that whispers of death.

Addiction and poison are not the unfortunate, extraneous consequences of the habit. They are the core of its troubling beauty. Klein shows how, in a variety of literary, philosophical and political contexts, the satisfactions of smoking, and the reflection upon these satisfactions, limn important religious and aesthetic experiences. Smoking, he argues, owes a great deal to the enterprise of appropriating the world symbolically, making sense of it, making it bearable, saying something about it to oneself and to others.

The cigarette is and the cigarette means. It is a moment in time (the smoke represents a delicious moment) and a moment out of time. It is not only a product, which is how it is invariably regarded by its enemies, it is also "a production"—"a little work of art," as Théodore de Banville, the great nineteenth-century aesthete, called it. Smoking is a ritual, and it has all the numinous force of a ritual. "The substance of smoke," Klein points out, "is a matter as close to the demateriality of spirit as soul is to the corporeality of the body." (Such an analysis will be lost, of course, on the secular wonkish world.) Klein quotes Sartre that "a life without smoking was not worth living." And also Mallarmé:

> The whole soul summed up
> When slowly we exhale it
> In several rings of smoke
> Abolished in other rings . . .

There is also the illuminating example of *Confessions of Zeno* (1923), Italo Svevo's

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complex and psychoanalytically engaged novel, a sort of "fumo-analysis" of a man whose life is spent having the last cigarette. Smoking, in Svevo's great book, is but one of the most pleasurable of the products of civilization with which we kill ourselves. There is no utopia, Svevo argues, free of illness: "Health can belong only to the beasts, whose sole idea of progress lies in their bodies." Humans have spirits with which they can, or must, affect their bodies. Smoking—and the endless effort to stop smoking—is bound up in the contest between the body and the spirit. It reeks with signification because it makes this complicated truth about human life manifest to our spirit through our bodies: "Smoking the last cigarette over and over [here Klein glosses Svevo] induces repeated feelings of victory over oneself and the prospect of a healthy future; at the same time, continuing to smoke offers the savor of freedom from the harsh necessity of having to stop." And resolving not to resolve further has the same effect.

Klein gives the lie to contemporary nonsense that the sexual attractiveness of cigarettes is the invention of modern advertising. Baudelaire wrote that the rhythms of smoking—the intense concentration, the self-centering of inhalation followed by its evaporation ("the self exhales itself ... grows increasingly tenuous ... progressively less differentiated from the exterior world it becomes")—mime the rhythms of the romantic lyric, and they mime, too, the rhythms of love, the intensity of self-absorption mixing with the intensity of absorption in the other. The famous Gitanes box, with its emblem of a hot gypsy woman, did not invent the erotic allure of women smoking; it appropriated meanings that had long been part of common culture. Spain in the early nineteenth century, as Klein shows, was probably the only country in which women regularly smoked cigarettes: Spain, in the European imagination the land of the fabulous and the exotic, lascivious gypsy woman. Merimée's story of Carmen, upon which Bizet's opera is based, contains the first scene ever in which a cigarette is offered, and the "cigarette of passion that rivets the narrator to Carmen, a scene already redolent with all those smoking scenes Hollywood would bring: dim light, he offers, she makes the sign 'yes,' he lights the cigarette and takes her wrist, eyes meet, faces enshrouded by an incense-like smoke."

Love, and also death. Klein's chapter on "The Soldier's Friend," a fine episode of social history, shows men sharing something that makes war more bearable. It is

Courtesy Andres Colben

TUPINAMBA COUNCIL OF SMOKING MEN, HANS STADEN (1557)

powerful in its evocation of the meaning of smoking in battle: the briefly instituted "economy of abundance in place of the normal condition of rationed scarcity"; the association of cigarettes with culture in the face of its destruction; the "fleeting antidote to depression" that makes nicotine the friend of the bereft and suffering, a connection that the Spanish observed among the Amerindian; the last cigarette of the dying man.

But Klein's most brilliant observations concern the way in which the physiology of nicotine eerily produces meaning. Nicotine, he observes, has paradoxical effects. It exacerbates the symptoms of anxiety: the pulse increases and the blood pressure rises, as a little burst o displeasure surges through the body. Bu the smoker has substituted a pain of pre cise origin for a vague discomfort: anxiet has given way to an understandable pain a "little death," a concentration of the sel over which the smoker has control. And having increased discomfort, nicotine re wards the body by the relaxation tha the organism feels as the poison is elimi nated from it. Cigarettes, in other words fight anxiety by making the body traverse the range from sharpened pain to re lease. They allow the smoker control of negative experience. They reproduce the principle of the sublime, which is to create ease by first creating dis-ease.

This sort of argument is very close to Wilbert's, though he comes by his formulation from very different evidence. The big claim of his book is that there is an intimate connection between the pharmacological properties of nicotine and the central elements of Amerindian culture: "nicotine action tended to provide empirical support ... for shamanistic beliefs of early Americans." The death-like experience of severe nicotine intoxication mirrors the founding myths of the gods' gift of tobacco to a group of ancestors seeking to rescue children from the land of the dead and the continuing communion of the shaman with these dark regions. Nicotine action intensifies, mentally and physically, the range of transformations the shaman undergoes in his voice, breathing, visual perception, skin tone. And, Wilbert shows, the shaman seemed to have intimate knowledge of how to manipulate nicotine intake (to use the language of modern science) so as "not to cross the phasic stimulant-depressant threshold of catecholamine discharge." This is the same dialectic of tension and release about which Klein writes in another context.

One hesitates to conclude that the power of tobacco is somehow intrinsic to the way in which the human body translates physiology into culture. Still, it is difficult to come away from these books

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without feeling that tobacco comes as close as anything to producing a corporeal language of the psyche. Two centuries before Mallarmé, a minor Jacobean poet equated flesh with tobacco and the two with death: "all flesh is hay / Thus thinke and drink tobacco." Sex and nicotine, the devil and nicotine, love and nicotine, freedom and nicotine, unruly women and nicotine, mortality and nicotine: these are all ancient associations. We must acknowledge our deeply ambivalent attitude toward desire. For, again, advertising did not create the desire for smoking, or its association with sex, pleasure, virility, women's liberation, satan, death and the gods. Like sex, smoking is bound up not with the desire for this or that object, it is bound up with desire itself: objectless, endless desire, which material objects and passing experiences satisfy, but never once and for all.

But what significance does all this have for public policy? First, consider the current campaign against teenage smoking, against which the president of the United States has recently acted. As with buying alcohol, driving a car, owning a handgun, voting or getting a pilot's license, the state has always protected the young, and society, from the immature judgment of youth; and it seems uncontroversial that so dangerous and fraught a practice as smoking should be restricted to adults, who are purportedly better at managing desires. The campaign against teenage smoking may well succeed, if only temporarily. (The ban on vending machines is more symbolic than consequential.) But there is a larger question here, and it concerns also the adult world in America and the larger anti-smoking frenzy.

Do we really want our desires centrally regulated? The history of the twentieth century bears witness to the power of propaganda, but do we really wish to manipulate our citizenry in this way? The preachers against smoking would do better to wise up existentially and acknowledge that they are discussing a more difficult matter than doing the rational thing and being a model citizen. To quit, as Klein argues (it is a feat that he himself accomplished as he thought his way through his book), one must first admit the depth of the love that one bears for cigarettes. Addiction is not only an attachment to a substance, it is also an attachment to a passion of great spiritual and cultural thickness, to a method of ordering our relationships to life's most troubling limits.

Second, it should be clear, as Klein suggests in a polemical appendix, that the suppression of smoking is a form of censorship and not simply a public

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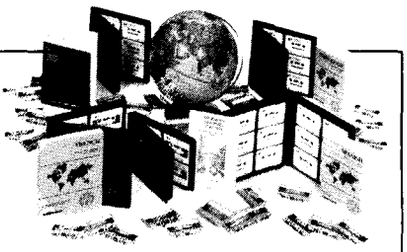

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health measure. For smoking is an exercise in meaning, and it is the explicit aim of much current policy to rupture the sinews of signification that have bound tobacco to culture for four centuries. (This form of censorship should be resisted, in my own view, while the "rights" of non-smokers should be respected.)

Third, we must recognize that the current paroxysms of anti-tobaccoism are not the result of new discoveries. They are the result of a new vision of what health means, or more precisely, of what death does not mean. It is telling, for example, that the Centers for Disease Control, in a recent calculation of the health costs of smoking, tallied up the total bill for the sicknesses of smokers and not just the increment that might be attributed to the habit itself. As if non-smokers will enjoy eternal good health! There is something literally death-defying about the contemporary opposition to cigarettes, a kind of rage that anyone would not choose 2.2 years of "healthy" life over a somewhat shortened and pleasurable existence, a resolute resistance to the intimations of death with which our ancestors knew how to live, and not only when they lit up. The debate about smoking—like the debate about euthanasia, suicide, the withholding of medical treatment and the quality of life—would be deepened by the admission that life is itself a mortal illness, that the chimes of midnight are never as distant as we hope. •

Realty Bites

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

Independence Day by Richard Ford

(Knopf, 451 pp., $18)

Most reviewers of *Independence Day* have concluded that Richard Ford is one of the great American writers of our time. Surely they underestimate him. Anybody who can keep the reader going through 451 pages about a holiday weekend in the life of a New Jersey realtor—a weekend in which nothing much happens except for some pitstops at the Baseball Hall of Fame, the Vince Lombardi Rest Stop on the New Jersey Turnpike, and other locations that I experience, even in literary form, as personal hell—is more than a great writer of our time. He may be the greatest writer of all time.

Tolstoy, after all, had the Napoleonic wars to keep us going. Conrad had imperialism; Steinbeck, the Depression; and Morrison has mined the African American experience. Maybe that was because they couldn't really *write*. Maybe the message from Ford and his celebrators is that a real writer doesn't need History. A real writer can handle a subject so intrinsically boring that the mere contemplation of it is a provocation to wrist-slitting. He can take days spent in holiday traffic and the showing of suburban houses to an unhappy couple from Vermont and dress all this in prose so gorgeous that the reader decides, tentatively at least, to live after all. Ford's next novel could be about dry-walling or data entry or developing a filing system for an insurance broker's home office in Akron. It doesn't matter. Everyone will love it, because, for dead-on dialogue and a perfect rendering of small-town and suburban distractedness, writing doesn't get much better than this.

> It's perfectly evident that the Markhams haven't looked in life's mirror for a while.... Vermont's spiritual mandate, after all, is that you don't look at your*self*, but spend years gazing at everything *else* as penetratingly as possible in the conviction that everything out there more or less stands for you, and everything's pretty damn great because you are. (Emerson had some different opinions about this.) Only, with home buying as your goal, there's no real getting around a certain self-viewing.

This isn't the only instance, to be sure, in which technical perfection has been achieved in a medium of communication only to find out we don't really have much to say. Log onto America Online, and you will be impressed by the abundance of colorful options and the ease of navigation from icon to icon, not to mention the accumulated knowledge of chemistry, physics, computer science and materials science that has made it possible for 3 million people to get together via the modem and the silicon chip. But click onto one of AOL's numerous chat groups and you'll find your fellow telecommunicants typing in terminally vapid entries such as "So is it raining there in Baltimore?" or "What exactly is the subject here?"

There are hints in his new novel that Ford is alert to the higher imperatives of content and historical context. In *The Sportswriter*, to which *Independence Day* is the sequel, Ford's hero Frank Bascombe inhabited a world that was just large enough for his personal tragedies and philanderings and not an iota of anything else. In his sportswriter phase, Frank connected to his fellow humans only through sex, in the case of women, or, in the case of men, through the boy-bonding, faux-heroic realm of sports; nothing else, and certainly not the events of his time, ever intruded. So it is a surprise to find, from the very beginning of *Independence Day*, faint evidences of a world beyond Frank Bascombe. We learn that he has a political affiliation ("yellow dog Democrat," even liberal), that it is 1988 and the summer of the Dukakis-Bush race, that the '87 stock market meltdown has had an unpleasant effect on property values.

In fact, there are hints throughout the book that we may be onto something even larger than Haddam, New Jersey, where Frank plies his trade—that there may be, yes, a metaphor afoot. He describes himself at one point as "an arch-ordinary American." He is reading, and trying to get his 14-year-old son to read Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Carl Becker's *The Declaration of Independence*, works that he describes engagingly as not "a bit grinding, stuffy or boring, the way they seemed in school, but brimming with useful, insightful lessons applicable directly or metaphorically to the ropy dilemmas of life." And of course this is the July Fourth weekend, when even the dopiest townships rouse themselves for a moment to reflect on America's violent and audacious origins. The inquisitive reader begins to feel that she may be on the trail of some grand American themes, such as Where America Is Headed or at least What It's Like to Live in America Now or (at the very least) What It's Like to Be a Guy in America Now.

Great American literature has always been, for the most part, the literature of great American guys: Ishmael, Huck Finn, Natty Bumppo, Jake Barnes. Traditionally, the guy genre wrestles with a single huge dilemma: the guy's responsibility to settle down into domesticity versus the lure of the unisexual world of adventure. A cozy hearth versus a high-country campsite, the Little League versus the bullring, hunting whales versus selling real estate. And the classics of American literature, as Leslie Fiedler

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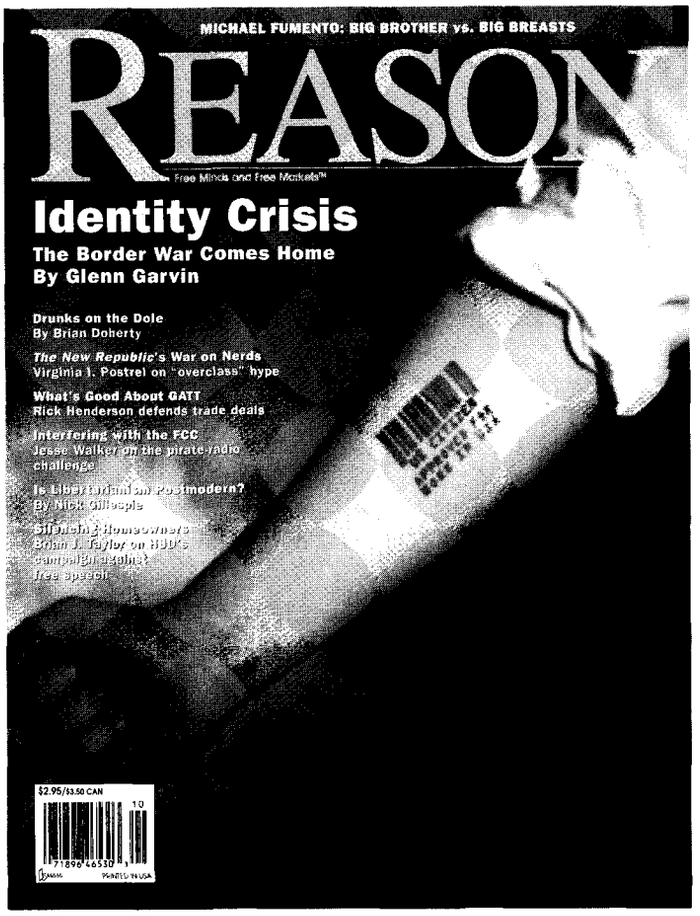

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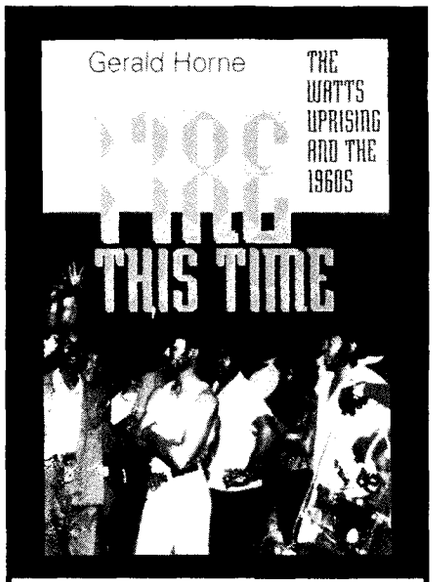

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observed, come down squarely on the side of the whales. Domesticity is an audition for the grave, civilization a female plot to keep men plodding along in their traces. Real men break loose and escape on whatever conveyance presents itself: a raft or a whaling ship or an old car. Only a wuss would live in a house, much less make a career of selling them.

Fiedler observed all this disapprovingly, taking it as evidence of some long-standing guy problem with "mature heterosexuality." And, in tune with the "adjustment psychology" that dominated post-war pronouncements on the human condition, a new genre arose, a genre in which guys settle—not without a struggle, but sooner or later and once and for all. The classic, or sub-classic, example is *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, in which the hero is led to the final illumination that it's a damn fine thing to be a corporate cog if you have a nice house and family in the suburbs to come home to. Henceforth, in Cheever and Updike and Roth, it is the duty of heroes to renounce heroism. Sex takes the place of the great maritime and riverine adventures. Real men test their mettle on lawn maintenance and the intricacies of post-monogamous marriage.

Not that it's been a simple temporal progression. While Updike was tucking his heroes into bedroom communities, Kerouac revived the Melvillian unisexual romp. Guy-writers such as Jim Harrison and the early Tom McGuane posit some mythical outdoor woman-free space where a man's deeds still signify in the old heroic sense. On the whole, however, the settling genre has come out ahead. For one thing, it fits in nicely with American fiction's general retreat from anything that could be called a "public" theme. We don't have a lot of recent fiction about union organizing or Mexican immigrants or the effects of corporate downsizing (and any fiction on these or similar themes that does appear is likely to be blown off as "political"). American fiction, for the most part, has come indoors and closed the shades behind it.

In the genre of the settling male, the hero must put up some resistance, so that there will be a modicum of suspense. Will he "mature"? At first Frank Bascombe would seem to be a hard nut to crack, a typical mid-'80s case of intimacy-phobia complicated by a full-blown fear of commitment. As soon as anyone gets close to him, or threatens to get close to him, his nimble mind scampers off into some safety zone of detached speculation. Having conceded the words "I love you" to his girlfriend, he starts wonder ing how the conversation would be goin; if he'd put the word "don't" in front o the verb. He loves his children (who ar living with his ex-wife) less ambivalently but he has a hard time fixing them in hi mind. In a scene that I found truly hai rowing, Frank "forgets" that his seriousl disturbed son has disappeared for severa hours into the darkness of the strang town where they are staying for the nigh and starts hitting on the inn's busty tough-talking cook.

In *Independence Day*, however the usual tension of the novel of settling—will he, for Chrissake, *grow up*?—is oddly aborted from the start. Usually, the genre has its hero come to see that all kinds of hideous compromises, including mindnumbing forms of employment, are redeemed by the love of a good woman and pert enough kids. But Frank has settled into the job entirely on his own, without the straitening influence of a houseful of dependents. Divorced and possessed of over a million dollars before the book begins, he could have done anything—returned to his forsaken calling as a fiction writer or, if he so desired, gone floating down the Mississippi in a yacht. He might even have moved, grown-up style, to within commuting range of his kids' new home in Connecticut. But no, he comes back (after a brief, offstage period of drifting) to dull old Haddam, New Jersey, and takes up realty, hoping, he tells us in the classical idiom of the genre, that "I might find myself, if not in the warp of many highly dramatic events, reckless furies and rocketing *joie de vivre*, still as close to day-to-day happy as I could be."

Stranger yet, he chooses to live in the house just vacated by his ex-wife and children. The familiar substitutes for the family. This choice of residence reminded me of an incident in *The Sportswriter*, in which a sort-of friend and fellow member of the Divorced Men's Club commits suicide after his *cri de coeur* is brushed off by the slippery Frank, and Frank, by way of mourning, goes and visits the poor fellow's empty apartment. Somehow, physical structures are easier to deal with than their residents. Realty beats reality. It lets you enter deeply into the lives of people like the would-be homebuyers from Vermont, but in a relationship mediated entirely by issues of square-footage and adequacy-of-wiring.

Seems like a case of ordinary commodity-fetishism, in which dead objects loom larger than persons—but it's a little less commonplace than that. What Frank craves, what he requires, is

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the ordinary itself. He's a settler all right but in a landscape so sparsely populated that the nonhuman details—the billboards and the turnpike exit signs and the strip malls—almost take over. If he can't focus on the humans in his life, it's partly because he's dazzled by the suburban detritus all around.

I must emphasize that the ordinary here is enlivened by no existential darkness or menace. There's real and there's real, and Ford's real is thoroughly innocent of the hyper- and the ir- and the sur-. Everything in this universe is just as it seems, as banal and soul-crushing as a Sunday afternoon spent shopping for garden tools. And despite some vague twinges of regret, this is all that our hero seems to want.

> Possibly this is one more version of "disappearing into your life," the way career telephone company bigwigs, overdutiful parents and owners of wholesale lumber companies are said to do and never know it. You simply reach a point at which everything looks the same but nothing matters much. There's no evidence you're dead, but you act that way.

Is there something here that Ford wants us to conclude about the state of the American soul? Well, like the rest of the settling genre, *Independence Day* is about a post-heroic America, where the memory of heroism lingers only in the play-world of sports. You would never know, from Frank's musings or from most real-life observations of the Fourth of July, that our collective independence was won through a bloody struggle against one of the world's great superpowers. "Best maybe just to pass the day as the original signers did . . . ," he concludes, "in a country-like setting near to home, alone with your thoughts. . . ." The only real heroism that the novel seems to ask of Frank is that he make contact, like any decent father, with his son, which he does, sort of, by the end. This is nice, but it isn't going to free any colonies.

Maybe there are some larger conclusions waiting to be excavated, as the July Fourth and Emerson themes would seem to suggest, such as: Democracy in Peril as Suburban Torpor Swallows All Notion of Citizenship, or Feckless Guys Would Like to Come Home But, Due to the Tyranny of Materialism, Will Settle for House. But Ford is even more of a slacker than his protagonist when it comes to the big issues. *The Declaration of Independence*, which Frank was planning to take up as a text with his son, is forgotten. Emerson, whom I expected to pop up at some point and make a pitch for the intense, morally engaged life, gets left in the back seat of the car. The Fourth of July collapses limply into an opportunity "to contemplate what we're dependent on . . . and after that to consider ways we're independent or might be, and finally how we might decide—for the general good—not to worry about it much at all." In the end, even realty floats away anticlimactically, with Frank opining, apropos of nothing in particular, that it's "not that commanding a metaphor."

So what has been going on here for all these hundreds of pages? There is the writing, of course, which is probably enough to motivate most of Ford's readers. And there are clues that perhaps, in some occult sense, it is Frank himself, the lapsed fiction writer, who is doing the writing. In several places realty is likened to writing, if only as "something to do." At one point Frank's ex-wife accuses him of writing his life instead of living it; and who, if not a writer or an English professor, would judge his occupation for how it works as a "metaphor"? Which would mean that Frank's less-than-heroic life is redeemed, according to the conventions of the settling genre, by the splendor of his sensibility, the sheer richness of his perceptions.

Never mind that he never actually writes them down. Never mind, too, that he may be, as his son puts it, "a complete failure." Who could disagree? The examined life is worth living even in a realty office in Jersey, and so is the cursorily examined life, and so is the life which, due to the pressures of survival, leaves no room for even the most perfunctory perusal. But there is a significant difference between the kind of life that we read (and write) about and the kind of life that we actually live: we have a lot more choice about what we read (and write). And when all is said and done—in this case, much more is said than done—I'd rather spend my time with a more spirited and interesting guy than Frank.

I worry that it's Richard Ford, and not just Frank Bascombe, who's been settling. Real estate and upper-middle-class anomie are themes that no doubt come naturally to the successful, middle-aged professional with more than one home. But it would be nice to see Ford's painterly talents applied to something larger than a teacup or, in this case, a New Jersey State commemorative plate. Don't settle, I say. Ditch Frank and, next time around, take a few chances.

BARBARA EHRENREICH is the author most recently of *The Snarling Citizen*, a collection of essays published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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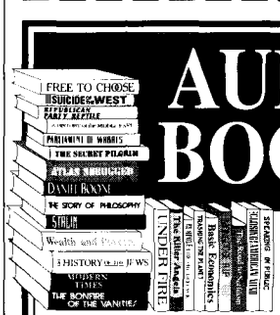

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Found in America

By Ruth R. Wisse

I Keep Recalling: The Holocaust Poems of Jacob Glatstein translated by Barnett Zumoff

(KTAV Publishing, 289 pp., $29.50)

Selected Poems of Yankev Glatshteyn translated and edited by Richard J. Fein

(The Jewish Publication Society, 215 pp., $24.95)

Outline for a story about two Yiddish writers in New York: Writer One arrives from Lublin in 1914. Four years later, aged 22, he is admitted to New York University Law School. By the time he fails his exams in his final year, he has already begun to publish poems and stories in the local Yiddish newspapers, so that maybe his failure to graduate sanctions an otherwise reckless decision to become a professional writer. He is an avid reader of English literature and American literature. In literary magazines such as *The Little Review*, *Poetry*, *Seven Arts*, and *Dial*, he follows the work of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Vachel Lindsay, e.e. cummings, and Gertrude Stein. Like them, he becomes a Modernist, but in his native Yiddish rather than his adopted English tongue.

Writer Two, a published Yiddish novelist and writer of stories, arrives in New York as a reluctant refugee in 1935. He feels so displaced in America that for a number of years he cannot regain his creative confidence. Born and raised in a rabbinic family, and immersed since childhood in Jewish mysticism, folklore, and ethical literature, he is considered an "anachronism" for writing stories about a demon-haunted shtetl world of Eastern Europe.

Writer One is a sophisticated political journalist, a cosmopolitan intellectual; Writer Two, speaking with an exaggerated Yiddish accent, decries humanism, citing the Kabbalah as his highest source of wisdom. By the perverse logic of modern culture, however, Writer One remains unknown in English-reading America, while Writer Two becomes the most famous Yiddish author of all time, and is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Some people believe that a version of this story has already been written. Cynthia Ozick's "Envy; or, Yiddish in America" renders the claustrophobia of the Yiddish literary community after the Second World War, when it knew that there would be no more Yiddish readers and Yiddish speakers coming over from Europe. Ozick's story rang so artistically true when it appeared in 1969 that insiders were sure that they could identify the real-life models for its characters: the celebrity author who has translators bidding for his favors like so many suitors of Betty Hutton, this object of envy named *der chazer*, the Pig, "because of his extraordinarily white skin, like a tissue of pale ham, and also because in the last decade he had become unbelievably famous"—surely this figure was Isaac Bashevis Singer, down to the demonic fable he reads at the 92nd Street Y and the biting jokes he trades with his adoring public. And if the famous Yiddish writer in the story recalls Singer, the envious "Edelstein" must be Jacob Glatstein. Glatstein was a Yiddish poet who, like the fictional Edelstein, wrote about the murdered Jews of Europe, and he was, again like the character in the story, the editor of a tiny-circulation Yiddish literary magazine. Ozick's tale describes how the uneven rivalry between the two writers plays itself out during a night of mounting hysteria.

Yiddish, widely perceived to be the most expendable part of Jewishness, was at the special mercy of the American marketplace, since only those writers who satisfied the taste of English editors could hope to win the attention of their own children, let alone a wider public. But Ozick's fiction parted from fact in significant ways. Unlike the young woman in her story who tells Edelstein that she will not translate him ("You don't interest me. I would have to be interested"), Ozick had herself translated Jacob Glatstein, and more successfully, in my view, than anyone else has done. Nor is she alone in finding this poet interesting. Jacob Glatstein has been attracting more English translators than any other Yiddish author with the exception of Singer.

It is just possible, indeed, that some day our story of two American Yiddish writers may take an unexpected turn: while the publishers of Singer, in search of quick profit and with little regard for his artistic reputation, keep hiring people to do (often sloppy) translations of his unpublished minor novels, Glatstein's translators take on the task for its own sake, perhaps even subsidizing their publishers. Does this mean that Glatstein will ever equal or overtake Singer in popularity? Not likely, but our story would exploit the suspense.

Jacob Glatstein became a Yiddish writer by choice. He could have written in English. (Abraham Cahan was four years older than Glatstein when he arrived in New York and this did not stop him from writing novels such as *The Rise of David Levinsky* in English.) Yet Glatstein did not try to publish in English, even though his literary Yiddish was a little shaky when he started out; he had never formally studied the language, and used the opportunity of later editions of his work to correct grammar and to upgrade vocabulary. There were many reasons to choose Yiddish, and among them Glatstein's idea of poetry was decisive. Poetry was to be authentically personal; and if psychoanalysis was correct in its view of childhood as the crucible of the adult self, then the true poet would have to draw from the language of his childhood in order to express himself. Glatstein instinctively grasped what Kafka meant when he complained that the Jewish mother was no *Mutter*, and that to call her by the German term instead of the Yiddish term created an emotional barrier between child and parent, between the child and his own identity. A Jew writing in German, Kafka specialized in estrangement. But Glatstein's Yiddish words and syllables could, like Aladdin's lamp, summon up his absent parents. Yiddish enabled him to dig so confidently into himself that he called his first book of poems, which appeared in 1921, *Yankev Glatshteyn*: the name of the book was the name of the author.

Two years earlier, in 1919, Glatstein and his colleagues Aaron Leyeles and N. B. Minkoff produced a manifesto of Introspectivism, called *Inzikh*, or *In the Self*, which contained as many points as Woodrow Wilson's peace plan of the same year, and exuded the same spirit of rational determination, the same progressive ardor. Through the prism of the individual self, the poet would convey the whole world in all its contrariety,

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"unclear or confused as it may be."

> We insist that the poet should give us the authentic image that he sees in himself and give it in such a form as only he and no one else can see it. If such a poem then becomes grist for the mill of Freudian theory, ... we do not mind. Art is ultimately redemptive, even if it is an illusory redemption or a redemption through illusion. And no redemption is possible in any other way but through ... internal personal concentration. Only a truly individual poem can be a means of self-redemption.

Life had never before been as complicated as it was in the modern big city, but the modern poet was freer to absorb its flow and to express the truth of his resulting experience. Free verse was declared not merely an option but a requirement of authentic self-expression, since the same meter or rhyme schemes can never serve two different moods or subjects. As for the matter of their Jewishness, these young poets, who made no distinction between intellectual poetry and the poetry of feeling, did not distinguish thematically between "pogroms and the workers' movement, Protestantism and Buddha, the Yiddish school and the Cross, the mayoral campaign and a ban on our language...." The Introspectivists were the first Yiddish cohort actually schooled in the American metropolis, and imbued with its liberal optimism. The paradox of their situation would emerge only gradually, when they put their theory into practice, using a national language under siege to express a sanguine internationalist view of the world.

Glatstein's early poems show just how intensely Yiddish poetry was experienced as a liberation within what was, throughout the 1920s, the largest Yiddish-speaking center in the world. While most serious Jewish writers in English were bound to their immigrant experience—one thinks of Anzia Yezierska, Samuel Ornitz, Michael Gold, Henry Roth—the Inzikhists were not linguistic immigrants, and so they were not limited artistically or intellectually by their social situation. Yiddish carried within itself the thousand-year experience of the Jews of Europe, while its fearless absorptive capacity made it the perfect instrument for experimenting with cultures in contact. Glatstein imagines the muse of Yiddish, whom he evokes by the nonsense alliteration "Tsela-tseldi," in the form of a nimble doe, a lithe hare, and urges her to remain young, resisting the association of her culture with misery and death.

Some of Glatstein's poems spring from the associative images of a single word, such as the word *tirtl-toybn*, or turtledoves, which conjures up a Bible lesson in childhood, or "arteriosclerosis," which limns an atrophied old age. One lyric is addressed to the Hindu god Brahma, whose name transliterated into Yiddish sounds refreshingly foreign. Another poem pleads "Open Sesame" from within the jewel-filled cave. Still another captures the sensation of a wartime immigrant who feels that all the extra editions of the daily papers are splattering his head with bloodstained news. Under the Latin title "Homo," a poem wryly replaces the messianic hope of the Jews with the Nietzschean dream of the God-challenger who will arise from human seed. "He will come./ He will have to come."

Glatstein's approach to language was cerebral and sensual, in variously weighted combinations, and wit was one of its early hallmarks. And he was able to sustain sharp contradictions in life as well as in language. Forced to take a job on one of the Yiddish dailies so that he could support his family, he alone among the Jewish writers of his day who made a similar compromise went on to become as good a commentator and a critic as he was a poet. He stayed married to his first wife Nettie Bush until his three children were grown, and only in 1952, nineteen years after their liaison had begun, did he move in with the artist Fanny Mazel. The public and the private mingled in Glatstein. His poetry throbbed with the tension of breaking news stories and with the suspense of a man poised between two women:

> On the table: fresh bread, swollen, fat.
> Around the table: silent guests—
> I, and she, and that other she.
> Mute mouths. Drumming hearts.
> The guests' hearts tick like small gold watches.
> Close by the bread the knife
> is sharp and still,
> stiller by far than the guests;
> the knife's little heart has a restless throb
> more restless
> than mine, or hers, or that other's.
> (translated by Cynthia Ozick)

It is understandable that most of the scholarly interest in Jacob Glatstein has concentrated on the modernism and the experimentation of his early years. *American Yiddish Poetry*, the bilingual anthology edited by Barbara and Benjamin Harshav, which appeared in 1986, features Glatstein as one of its seven poets, and includes in appendices a complete translation of the original *Inzikh* manifesto, as well as excerpts from Introspectivist "documents" by Glatstein and Leyeles on their evolving approach to poetry. This sumptuous volume recognizes the Introspectivists as the most intellectually

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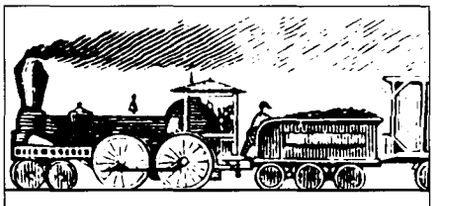

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sophisticated and the most aesthetically self-conscious of Yiddish literary cohorts, and delights in demonstrating the complexity of their work.

The difficulty of Glatstein's poetry attracts modern academics for some of the same reasons that it once offended his contemporaries: it requires an educated reader. Yet there is more to Glatstein than his modernism. Already by the end of the 1920s, he began to be troubled by certain aspects of the modernist aesthetic. He seemed bored, even deadened by the subject of the weltering self. In art as in life, the disregard for human traditions shreds the fabric of the civilization that revolutionaries propose to improve. Besides, Yiddish remained the language of Jews only as long as they lived as Jews. Glatstein sensed that the openness of the Yiddish language was related to the vulnerability of the Jewish people, and he grew concerned about the effect of social restiveness on them both.

He feared American nativism and American materialism for their impact on his people and their culture. The former resulted in immigration restrictions that cut off the flow of Yiddish-speakers from Europe, and the latter promoted a kind of Americanization that sacrificed too much of the usable past. Curiously, though, Glatstein resolved the artistic problem and the social problem in contrary ways. In the 1930s he began to mine Yiddish as a repository of Jewish lore, kindling to the national and historical properties of the language, and creating a series of dramatic poems on Jewish historical and literary personalities. Thus, in the voice of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (1772-1811), one of the most intriguing figures in the history of Hasidism, he described the struggle for vital creation that every true artist has to wage each day anew:

> Nathan, lay off thinking today;
> Have you ever seen such a world:
> Such loveliness, every which way?
> I'll give you a mouthful of fist
> If you squeeze out a thought today.
> Is there anything that keeps you from
> living?
> Breathe the sun, like a fly....
> Let's go backwards again...
> Let's think our whole fortune away
> And squander our thoughts on the byways.
> Let's become holy peasants
> With hallowed cows on a holy pasture;
> Let's eat kasha with milk;
> Let's find stinking tobacco to smoke
> And tell fairy tales about dwarfs;
> And let's sing songs.
> *Dai-donna-dai, dai-donna-dai,*
> Pure songs, without words—
> *Dai-donna-dai.*
>
> (translated by Leonard Wolf)

Glatstein continued writing his series of Bratslaver monologues through the bleakest years of the century, using a historical figure who had fought despair to project an antidote to despair. And yet, at the peak of his powers as a poet, he neglected to teach his children Yiddish, since he apparently did not wish to send them to a Yiddish school. He became steadily more prolific, and during his life he published eleven books of poetry, three novels and six volumes of selected essays, but each book registers the decline of Yiddish with greater aware ness than the one before.

Glatstein's reservation about Americ did not take the form that it usually too among intellectuals, that is, an enthus asm for Russia. Glatstein was, in fact, on of the very first of the informed anti Communists. He was among those wh opposed the socialist experiment fron the moment that they learned of its coer cive policies. When some of the Sovie Yiddish poets mocked the neglect of ar

Meditation on Song and Structure

I love to wake to the *coo coo* of the mourning dove
At dawn—
like one drug masking another's ill effects,
It tells me that everything's all right when I know that everything's wrong.
It lays out the landscape's hash marks,
the structures of everyday.
It makes what's darkened unworkable
For that moment, and that, as someone once said, is grace.
But this bird's a different story.

Dawn in the Umbrian hills.
In the cracks of the persian blinds, slim ingots of daylight stack and drip.
This bird has something to say—
a watery kind of music,
Extended improvisations, liquid riffs and breaks—
But not to me, pulled like a dead weight
From the riptide of sleep, not to me,
Depression's darling, history's hand job, not to me ...

Twice, now, I've heard the nightingale.
First in the first light
Of a dust-grey dawn,
And then at midnight, a week later,
Walking my friend to the parking lot
In Todi, moon vamping behind the silted cloud mounds,
A pentimento of sudden illumination,
Like bird work or spider work.
Senti, my friend said, *Shhh*,

È l'usignolo, the nightingale,
As bird and bird song drifted downhill,
easy as watershine,
Ripply and rock-run.
Silence. No moon, no motorbike, no bird.
The silence of something come and something gone away.
Nightingale, ghost bird, ghost song,
Hand that needles and threads the night together,
light a candle for me.

Swallows over the battlements
and thigh-moulded red tile roofs,
Square crenelations, Guelph town.
Swallows against the enfrescoed backdrop of tilled hills
Like tiny sharks in the tinted air
That buoys them like a tide,
arrested, water-colored surge.
Swallows darting like fish through the alabaster air,
Cleansing the cleanliness, feeding on seen and the unseen.

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n America, Glatstein responded in kind:

May God (—How's that again?) bless your
hands
that ripped away all the veils of the seven
arts.
Now, without blushing,
dropping your underpants,
you can fertilize the fields of Cherson
to the appreciative joy
of an audience of thousands
that comprehends the utility
of manure that brings forth bread.

Acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining a vibrant Yiddish culture within a competitive society, Glatstein accused the Soviet system, despite its formal support for Yiddish, of causing far more serious harm to art and to Jews.

Most obviously threatening was the rise of fascism in Germany and the attendant anti-Semitism in Poland. In 1934 Glatstein returned to Lublin, where his mother was dying. There he understood that he was witnessing the end of Polish Jewry. Had Glatstein been more of a political figure, he might never have formulated his thoughts as starkly as he did, since pessimism about the prospects of the Jews of Europe was associated with a branch of Jewish national politics that was considered to the right of his own Labor-Zionist circle. But the discipline of *Inzikh* served him well. Intent on personal truth, he wrote poems in the 1930s that anticipated the horror so accurately they were later collected as "Poems of Remembrance" and "Poems of the Holocaust," despite having been written before Hitler established his death camps. This is the so-called national side of Glatstein that anchors him as a "Jewish" poet. Thereafter, he returned obsessively and in the most varied states of mind to the sacrifice of his father Isaac in the ghetto of Lublin and to the murderers whom he did not forget and did not forgive.

I *Keep Recalling: The Holocaust Poems of Jacob Glatstein* reproduces in the original and facing English translation a thematic collection that was originally put out in 1967 by the Association of Survivors of Bergen-Belsen. This volume was conceived by survivors as a modern threnody for their destroyed families and homes, and its translation was a labor of love for Barnett Zumoff. But he is not altogether up to the task. There are quite a number of mistaken readings ("clarity," *klorkayt*, for "pensiveness," *farklertkayt*; *bokherim*, young men, for *bkhoyrim*, eldest sons, and so on), and there are other infelicities that will make it hard for English readers to believe in Glatstein's genius. They may understand, for example, that the poem "Civil War" is Abel's posthumous taunt of his murderer Cain, but when a missed dative in the middle of the poem suddenly brings the dead Jews alive to create monuments—instead of having the living create monuments to them—the poem joins the ranks of the victims. One notes the excess of goodwill over good craft in this volume not only to safeguard the poet's reputation, but also to protect the Jewish interest that the collection is presumably meant to serve. Glatstein warned that a surfeit of sentiment, commemoration without "artistic tact," may inadvertently diminish rather than exalt the dead.

What is a "Holocaust poem"? A lyric poem dated June, 1938, sketches the return of wagons at nightfall to their village where no one is there to greet them. The stillness is taut, as before a storm. As the weary wagoners climb down, a clever phrase gets tangled in each brooding head—gets tangled, because, unlike that earlier figure of Yiddish literature, Sholem Aleichem's Tevye the Dairyman,

To come back as one of them!
Loose in the light and landscape-shine,
language without words,
Ineffable part of the painting and ignorant of it,
Pulled by the lunar groundswell,
Demi-denizen of the godhead
Spread like a golden tablecloth wherever you turn—
Such judgment, such sweet witch-work.

—

This mockingbird's got his chops.
Bird song over black water—
Am I south or north of my own death,
west or east of my final hurt?
In North Carolina, half a century ago,
Bird song over black water,
Lake Llewellyn Bibled and night-colored,
mockingbird
Soul-throated, like light, a little light in great darkness.

Zodiac damped, then clicked off,
cloud-covering-heaven.
Bird song over black water.
I remember the way the song contained many songs,
As it does now, the same song
Over the tide pool of my neighbor's yard, and mine's slack turning,
Many songs, a season's worth,
Many voices, a light to lead back
to silence, sound of the first voice.

—

Medieval, pelatic, why
Does the male cardinal sing that song, *omit*, *omit*,
From the eminence of the gum tree?
What is it he knows,
silence, *omit*, *omit*, silence,
The afternoon breaking away in little pieces,
Siren's squeal from the by-pass,
The void's tattoo, *Nothing Matters*,
mottoed across our white hearts?

Nature abhors originality, according to Cioran.
Landscape desires it, I say,
The backyard unloading its cargo of solitudes
Into the backwash of last light—
Cardinal, exhale my sins,
help me to lie low and leave out,
Remind me that vision is singular, that excess
Is regress, that more than enough is too much, that
compression is all.

CHARLES WRIGHT

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who maintained his buoyant equilibrium through wit, these broken Jews are assaulted by a cruel silence on the part of God and man.

And each sees in the other's eyes
A prayer of fear:
When death comes,
Let me not remain the only one,
Do not pass over me with my thin bones.
(translated by Chana Bloch)

The silent plea of each emaciated member of this prayer-quorum arises so naturally out of the Jewish liturgy that one expects to find it already in the prayerbook:

Zol ikh nor nisht blaybn der lebediker eyner.
Farze mikh nisht mit mayne dine beyner.

The growing corpus of translations of Glatstein attests to the power of this American poet—and the Harshav volume makes a superb case for taking Glatstein as an American poet—yet many of his poems still await their English redeemer. Since "Wagons" appears in all three of the books before us, its concluding lines may demonstrate the difficulties of bringing Glatstein into English. Zumoff's version reads: "May I not be the only one to remain alive—/Don't overlook me and my skinny bones." There is no poetry here, and the emphasis on "alive" instead of "alone" at the end of the penultimate line produces an upbeat effect quite contrary to that of the original. The Harshavs' version reads: "Let me not remain alone./Do not overlook my lean bones." This spareness avoids sentimentality. The near rhyme conveys the ominous effect of the Yiddish closure. Missing, however, is any trace of a liturgical context, and "lean bones" suggests a marathon runner rather than an incipient corpse. And Richard Fein has: "God, when death comes marching in, /don't make me the sole survivor, /don't miss me because my bones are thin." Fein may be justified in wanting to sharpen Glatstein's image of the solitary survivor, but the images of death marching in where saints fear to tread, and of God failing to make out the survivor because his bones are thin, anthropomorphize the scene almost to the point of ridicule.

Following his return from Europe, Glatstein absorbed the calamitous events of history as a judgment on his own life. The ubiquity of fascism, the anti-Semitism of Stalin and Stalinism, the British hostility to the Jews in Palestine, and the inability of "slobbering democracy" to respond to these dangers, spelled for Glatstein the failure of the Westernization in which he had participated. He slammed the gate on that vile process in his unforgettable poem "Good Night, World." It was written in April, 1938, and it shook up the Jewish world as no other poem had done since Chaim Nahman Bialik's "In the City of Slaughter," which was written in response to the Kishinev pogrom of 1903. Both poets exposed the humiliation of Jews at the hands of Gentiles, but whereas Bialik excoriated the tradition of Jewish passivity, Glatstein's foil was the faith of modern Jews in liberal progress.

JACOB GLATSTEIN, 1956

Good night, wide world.
Big stinking world.
Not you, but I, slam shut the gate.
With my long gabardine,
My fiery, yellow patch,
With head erect,
And at my sole command,
I go back into the ghetto.
Wipe off all markings of apostasy!
I roll my body in your grime;
Glory, glory, glory to you,
Crippled Jewish life!
I cast out all your unclean cultures, world!
Though all has been laid waste,
I burrow in your dust,
Sorrowing Jewish life.

Swinish German, hostile Polack,
Thievish Amalekite—land of swill and guzzle,
Slobbering democracy,
With your cold compress of sympathy,
Good night, brash world with your electric glare.

Back to my kerosene, my shadowed tallow candles,
Endless October and faint stars.
To my twisting streets and crooked lantern,
To my sacred scrolls and holy books,
To tough Talmudic riddles and lucid Yiddish speech,
To law, to duty, and to justice,
To what is deeply mine.
World, joyously I stride
Toward the quiet ghetto lights.

Good night, I give you in good measure
All my redeemers;
Take your Jesus Marxes; choke on their daring.
Burst with each drop of our baptized blood.

And still I trust that though He tarry,
My waiting will spring newly day by day.
Green leaves again will rustle
On our withered tree.
I need no comforting.
I walk again my straight and narrow way:
From Wagner's heathen blare to Hebrew chant
And the hummed melody.
I kiss you, cankered Jewish life,
The joy of homecoming weeps in me.
(translated by Marie Syrkin)

One may argue that a threat to withdraw is only a rhetorical means of reengagement, yet Glatstein was made vulnerable and increasingly isolated by his identification with the Jewish fate. When he arranged his collected poems in 1956, he reversed the order of their publication, beginning with the last, so that his poetry would be read through the prism of his mature self rather than developmentally, beginning in youth. As if to press home how thoroughly he had changed, the poet who had called his

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econd book *Fraye ferzn,* championing free verse" as form and metaphor of unrammeled independence, opened his elected works with a rhymed sonnet. At he forest's gate sits an unarmed guard, who lets anyone slip past him into the lark wood. The wayfarer is warned, however, that should he penetrate the forest, ll his preparations will prove insufficient, and any attempts at self-protection vill be in vain. "The main thing is how nuch fear you can tolerate." The problem with trying to cull "poems of the Holocaust" from among Glatstein's postwar opus, then, is that he really has no other kind.

In later years, Glatstein wrote as much about American Jews and Israel as he did about the absent Jews of Europe. Some targets of Glatstein's criticism bring to mind the young Philip Roth: suburbanites who maintain the social trappings of Jewishness without religious faith or spiritual content. He detested the vulgar assimilation that abandons an inherited culture and imperfectly grasps any other.

> The automobile devours
> and elegantly desecrates
> chunks of Sabbath boundaries.
> A retired businessman hastens to shul
> where prayers are offered
> for good health and length of days.

Built for speed and distance, the automobile is badly mismatched with the "Sabbath boundaries" established by Jewish law which limit the distance a Jew is permitted to walk on the day of rest and thereby ensure him precisely the "length of days" for which he prays in vain once he drives. Implicit in Glatstein's criticism of contemporary American life is Judaism's higher standard of joy. When he compares the length of one of his father's Sabbaths to the rushed quality of his own, he knows that it is the present, not the past, for which he must mourn.

Even more than his father's example, the emergence of Israel was Glatstein's solace and strength. Whereas many Yiddish writers resented the Jewish community in Palestine for its imposition of Hebrew over Yiddish, Glatstein never let his views of "the language question" color his enthusiasm for the Zionist project as a whole. (He never let it influence his attitude toward communism, either.) He wrote that unless the Jew rejoices in the Jewish state, "his life seeps away as through a leaky pipe across a ruin." He wondered how the Jews who had yearned so long for a miracle could remain indifferent to the miracle that they were witnessing. In a poem of symbolic homecoming, a bored Israeli immigration official asks the visitor, "Where are you from?" The speaker replies: *Yeder yids funvanen/ iz fundanen.* Every Jew's whence/ is hence. The Yiddish rhyme, untranslatable into idiomatic Hebrew (and archaic in this English equivalent), exploits the unique ability of Yiddish to affirm the unique importance of Israel.

It says a great deal about contemporary Jewish culture that while Glatstein's modernism has found an appreciative audience in the academy, and his poems on the Holocaust appeal to a widening public, the late poems on Israel and America are largely ignored. Even Richard Fein, who provides a balanced selection of Glatstein's work, prefers the reflective lyrics to the gnarled, emotionally raw, and more topical poems of Glatstein's final fifteen years. Glatstein, who died in 1971, became one of the most overtly political Jewish writers in America, not in his ideological identification with one side or another in the debates that raged in his time, but in his recognition of the political dimension of a people that had never mastered the art of politics. He depicted American Jews as Marranos, or crypto-Jews, for the way they cringed before Gentiles and failed to rejoice in their new freedoms. The emphasis on Glatstein's poems of death and dying at the expense of his vital anger and his vital joy confirms the very qualities of Jewish life that aroused his contempt.

Jacob Glatstein was jealous for Yiddish and jealous for the Jews, as Isaac Bashevis Singer was not. While Singer's philosophical indifference to the nihilism of modern man kept him outside of politics, including the politics of rescue, Glatstein situated himself at the emotional center of the modern Jewish people to the point of collapsing the distinction between a Jewish writer and a Jewish leader. Singer developed the persona of the devil, the holy sinner, to characterize the playful and potentially corrupting relation of the artist to his subjects, dead and alive. Glatstein casts the hero of his two autobiographical novels as an American Joseph who receives the petitions of his doomed brothers and sisters. The beauty of a writer's work does not alone determine the fate of a writer, certainly not of a Yiddish writer in America. Every community promotes the masters whom it values, and it will take a stronger Jewish polity than America has so far produced to bring this remarkable poet fully into the mainstream of American culture, which is where he belongs.

RUTH R. WISSE is professor of Yiddish and comparative literature at Harvard University.

TRB *continued from page 4*

about marital fidelity, but we can't be sure we'd do a better job of resisting temptation than, say, Bill Clinton, until we've been governor of Arkansas.

Most societies have implicitly accepted this logic. Of the 1,154 societies studied by anthropologists, 980 have been openly polygamous. And extra wives have sometimes been a specific perk of political power. (The four Incan offices from petty chief to full chief were given ceilings of seven, eight, fifteen and thirty women, respectively. Don't tell Clinton.) Such overt polygamy is probably closer to the "natural" state of our species than is our officially monogamous society. Indeed, today, when we hold high-powered politicos under extra close scrutiny, expecting them to be *less* libidinous than medium-status guys, we're asking them to swim directly against the currents of human nature.

Well, tough luck. Resisting nature is part of the whole idea behind our government. Democracy supposedly places limits on what money and other correlates of status can bring. And the "unnatural" institution of monogamy is one of the oldest expressions of this egalitarian spirit; you may be rich and powerful, but you still get only one wife. (Anthropologist Laura Betzig documented the historical link between polygamy and authoritarianism in a 1986 tome called *Despotism and Differential Reproduction.*) Thus it's ironic that the breakdown of monogamy is often linked, with some validity, to libertine liberals. For the effects of monogamy's demise are largely right wing: upper-class men claim multiple wives—if in serial, not parallel, fashion—or philander widely. Let the rest of them eat cake.

Politicians get lots of non-sexual perks: World Series tickets, lavish respectful attention, even the chance to elevate humankind. If this isn't enough for them—if they can't stand the burden of today's resurgent puritanism—then they're free to find another calling. Political office in a democracy is a privilege bestowed by society, and society is free to attach strings. So let's not let Packwood frame the terms of debate the way Clarence Thomas did, by defying us to prove him guilty beyond reasonable doubt of some clear-cut illegality. The burden of proof should be more nearly the opposite. When a candidate for, or occupant of, high public office can't remove well-founded doubts about his character, then the people, or their representatives, can tell him to get lost. If Packwood is planning to consume weeks of valuable C-SPAN time trying to show that he's only a little worse than the average male primate, he should spare us the ordeal. We have a right to expect better.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

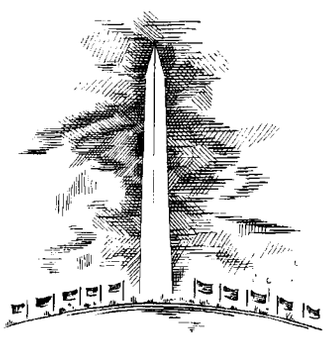
Smoke

"TOBACCO TODAY, SEX TOMORrow ... in the next three or four years, it will be illegal to smile at a stranger." Now, to some, this might sound like hysteria, particularly if one is fond of sex and innocent of the tobacco vice. But in the recent movie *Smoke*, the comic despair of these words is not only meant as a joke. An elegy to the vanishing culture of the cigar store, *Smoke* is really a celebration of tobacco as a test of tolerance. The good smoke is the good life, and longevity isn't everything. Or so the patrons of this Brooklyn haven are allowed to believe.

WHAT IS TRULY REMARKABLE about this film is that it was made in America by Americans and starring Americans. For nothing poses as subversive a threat to the neo-Puritanism of contemporary American culture as the cigarette. Its danger, its arrogance, its eroticism, its foulness and its beauty all conspire to make it, improbably, the last holdout against the conformism of cultural correctness. And before you suspect that this is yet another Eurotrashing of America, allow me to offer a few anecdotes and examples from the pleasure wars of smoking.

IT ALL STARTED ABOUT NINE months ago when I wandered innocently into a Washington Starbucks to buy a cup of coffee. My fatal error was to forget that I was holding a cigarette in my hand. At first no one noticed. Then panic set in. The manager rushed to tell me that smoking wasn't allowed (in a café!). I submissively apologized, and agreed to leave the premises. Behind the counter, everyone glared my way, giving me the distinct feeling that whoever had preceded me in daring to smoke here had met a grim fate. Unfortunately, I still wanted a little milk and sugar in my coffee. Sheltering my blushing cigarette in one hand, frantically pouring milk with the other, I was then accosted by the head bully, who told me to get out, with or without my coffee, definitely without my milk and sugar. I have, needless to say, stayed far away from any Starbucks ever since, but having just moved here from Europe I found the experience instructive. America had found another fetish, another vice to provide the illusion of virtue.

THE SANCTIMONIOUS MORALIZing does not end, though, with the persecution of decadent Europeans. If it did, it would, on balance, probably be a good thing. But in the current prohibitionist climate, not even the memory of such an American icon as Franklin Roosevelt is spared the censorious eye of the modern-day prohibitionist. About a month ago, a news report in *The New York Times* about a controversy over the official seal of FDR's hometown, Hyde Park, casually referred to the president's affection for cigarettes as "a vile habit." Then some self-styled anti-smoking czar pronounced on the workings of FDR's conscience: "If President Roosevelt knew what we know now about the dangers of tobacco, he would have quit smoking." Well, I suppose there is that chance. But I would suggest that Roosevelt, a man of such elegance, character and enormous inner strength, was well aware of the risks of a life well lived and would have chosen to indulge his gentle vice.



THERE IS SOMETHING PECULIAR and a bit sinister about America of all places leading the policing of a pleasure so personal and so popular. This is, after all, also the land of gun-toting militia-men and rugged libertarians whose idea of good government is an effective postal service moonlighting as an army in times of war. And yet a sin of such relative innocence as smoking is officially condemned in the most strident, self-congratulatory terms, as if health were an obligation to society and purity the measure of personal value. No one pretends that smoking is good for you, or that pregnant women should even for a second think about smoking, or that cigarettes should be force-fed to 8-year-olds. The issue, to put it perhaps a bit grandly, is the freedom of adult men and women to live and die as they choose. And who are these health-zealots anyway with their clinical sensibilities who presume such omniscience about the means and ends of the good life? What ever made them think that they are models for anything, except perhaps for the choice of a life bought at the cost of living?

FOR ANYONE GROWING UP IN Europe, smoking a cigarette is not only that most easily embraced act of rebellion, it is, properly enjoyed, an act of culture, a ubiquitous affirmation of pleasure as a priority in life. But it is just as importantly, an invaluable companion to any teenager's first discovery of sexual attraction. And so nothing in this American spectacle of righteous abstinence is more depressing than the sight of the proselytizing teenager finding meaning in the cause of anti-smoking. One wants to grab one of these kids and say, No, go find a girl and sit behind a tree and hold her hand while she fingers the cigarette you offered her and light it for her and watch her inhale the eros of your gesture and open her lips before you and blow the smoke along her face, and then, perhaps then, you will find meaning. And you will know that danger, not purity, gave your life love.

BUT I AM FORGETTING MYSELF. For Europe, these days, is not exactly a model for America when it comes to tobacco tolerance. According to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*, smoking has also begun to decline in Europe. Still, there is a difference. European anti-smoking laws are, mercifully, mostly ignored and hardly ever enforced. And when they are, it is often in order to accommodate that most unedifying sight in Europe in August, the loud and fat American tourist who you'd think would have issues of his own to deal with before hectoring his hosts. But no, this monument to the bad life is here to provide Europeans with an example of a healthy existence. It would be merely comical if it weren't working so well. It has, in fact, become more difficult to smoke in Europe, and so in the spirit of fairness, I will end with an anecdote from Sweden, not exactly a temple of sin, I grant you, but not exactly America either. "Last February," the *Journal* reports, "when a Stockholm man waiting at an outdoor bus stop began smoking, a woman slapped him in the face and shouted for him to stop. The man considered suing the woman for assault, but lawyers advised him he would find little sympathy with the courts because he wasn't supposed to be smoking there." As a European, I am ashamed. As a Dane, I am not in the slightest surprised.

NADER MOUSAVIZADEH

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Our position, word by word.

Youth

At Philip Morris, we believe that adults have the right to choose whether to smoke or not.

Minors, on the other hand, should not smoke. Period.

We also believe that preventing minors from having access to cigarettes is the key to addressing this issue.

That's why we recently launched *Action Against Access*, one of the most comprehensive programs ever introduced to combat the issue of youth access to cigarettes.

Action Against Access is a series of tough initiatives that have as their ultimate goal making all cigarette sales face-to-face transactions so age can be verified in person.

We are confident that, when fully implemented, this program will make a difference.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing youth access: educators, lawmakers, parents, communities. And, of course, the tobacco industry.

At Philip Morris we will continue to take a leadership role so that minors do not have access to cigarettes.

PHILIP MORRIS U.S.A.

We want you to know where we stand.

Facts Matter As part of *Action Against Access*, all Philip Morris cigarette packs and cartons in the United States will carry the following notice: "Underage sale prohibited."

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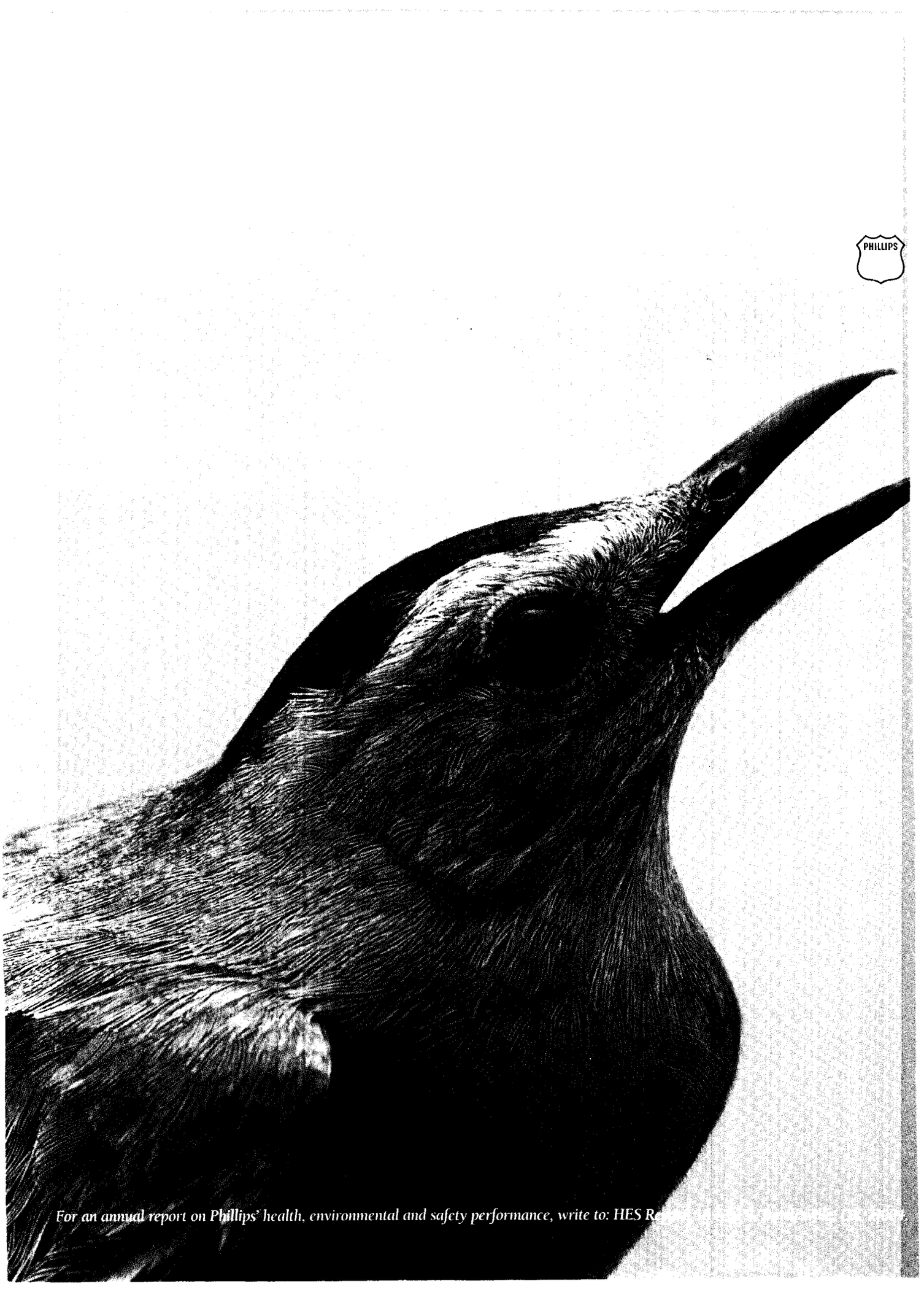

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